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Security Council

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Official communiqué of the 6978th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 13 June 2013, at 3 p.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"On 13 June 2013, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 6978th meeting in private with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.

"The Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries heard a briefing under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure by Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

"Members of the Council, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, and representatives of participating contributing countries had an exchange of views."

13-36386 (E) 140613

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United Nations S/PV.6979

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6979th meeting
Friday, 14 June 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Sir Mark Lyall Grant	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Oyarzábal
	Australia	Ms. King
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Briens
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Manzi
	Togo	Mr. Kpayedo
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2013/254)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

13-36395 (E)

Accessible document

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2013/254)

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and I request the Chief of Protocol to escort him to his seat at the Council table.

Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President: I also recognize the presence in the Chamber of His Excellency Mr. Ivan Mrkić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hashim Thaçi to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/254, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zarif.

Mr. Zarif: On 19 April, following difficult political negotiations personally facilitated by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union (EU), Ms. Catherine Ashton, a historic first agreement on principles governing the normalization of relations was initialled between Belgrade and Pristina.

The agreement, consisting of 15 points, provides for the establishment of an association/community of Serb municipalities that would encompass a range of competences related to the people's day-to-day life. It also envisages holding local elections in 2013 in northern Kosovo municipalities with the facilitation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Each party also undertook not to block the other side's progress in their respective European Union integration paths. An implementation committee made up of representatives from both sides is to be established under the facilitation of the European Union. Importantly, both sides also affirmed the importance of continuing to engage in a political dialogue.

The Secretary-General welcomed the agreement and encouraged the parties to conclude this historic process and to take concrete measures aimed at faithfully implementing the agreement. I wish to congratulate the leaders of both sides, who are present today in this Chamber, for the wisdom, prudence and political foresight they have shown in jointly taking this fundamental step forward. That determination and persistence will also be needed to sustain this spirit of compromise and mutual respect as they carry their agreement forward. On 22 May, as a sign of their commitment, the parties agreed on an implementation plan for the provisions contained in the 19 April agreement. It provides timelines for implementation that will require both sides to move ahead expeditiously. It is clear that a high degree of commitment, flexibility and creativity will also be required to meet those ambitious timelines.

I believe that the international community's support and resourcefulness will also be needed to help ensure that positive momentum is sustained in the face of inevitable challenges. While the international community has regularly committed a strong level of political engagement and resources to promoting progress, that may be even more crucial in the coming period for all international presences in Kosovo. A generous investment internationaln resources and efforts will preserve the peace dividends in the region, and support for an integrated and coordinated implementation process will be crucial. Among others, a key factor in the successful implementation of the 19 April agreement will be support for it from the Serbs of northern Kosovo. I appreciate the Belgrade leadership's courageous and continuing efforts to reach out and raise understanding and support for the

agreement among the leaders and people of northern Kosovo. Those efforts have included proactive exchanges with and visits from senior Government officials in order to address the concerns of Kosovo Serbs about the impact of the agreement on their future.

I also wish to stress that such support cannot and should not be seen as Belgrade's sole responsibility. All share responsibility for achieving better communications with the population of the north and for taking action that addresses — rather than exacerbates — the concerns and legitimate interests of the people there. Public protests in northern Mitrovica, including a mass rally of several thousand Kosovo Serbs on 22 April and a subsequent demonstration organized by university students on 25 April, indicate the level of continuing apprehensions, as well as the paramount importance of better communication to all groups and stakeholders in the north.

Over the past week, joint working groups have been focusing on the implementation details and other issues, such as energy and telecommunications and the exchange of liaison officers. Those discussions have been taking place against the backdrop of the upcoming consideration by the EU Council of Serbia's and Kosovo's progress on their respective EU accession tracks.

We continue to witness the symptoms of tension and uncertainty in various parts of Kosovo with respect to the translation of political agreements into practice on the ground. As reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/254), the threat of instability remains present in sensitive areas, both north and south of the Ibar River. Too often, local leaders still appear to be reticent to speak out clearly and firmly and to ensure an effective response to acts of ethnic intolerance or intimidation directed at members of any of the communities in Kosovo.

Regardless of those ongoing concerns, there were also some encouraging efforts on the ground alongside developments at the political level. In that context, I should like to make particular mention of President Atifete Jahjaga, who has been addressing some of the inter-ethnic issues in Kosovo.

The Kosovo police has established ethnically mixed special units in four regions for the protection of Serbian religious and cultural heritage sites. The unit covering the Peć Patriarchate was constituted on 16 May and is now working together with the Kosovo Force and church leaders to gradually assume greater security duties there. In the same time frame, the implementation of the Law on the Historic Centre of Prizren moved forward with the establishment of a Council tasked with monitoring progress and compliance.

Publicly funded repairs and reconstruction of the Orthodox gravestones damaged or destroyed in a wave of attacks across Kosovo this past January is progressing. A majority of the affected gravestones have been repaired by now, and work is continuing. At the end of May, the Kosovo authorities, in cooperation with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, organized a broad-based inter-faith conference, which included leaders of all faiths in Kosovo, including the Serbian Orthodox Church.

In compliance with resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the Kosovo Assembly recently envisaged legislation recognizing the status and rights to benefits of survivors of sexual violence during the conflict. That important addition followed active advocacy efforts by civil society organizations, together with the United Nations and other international actors on the ground.

I wish to take this opportunity simply to highlight one additional crucial area in which progress could and, in my view, should accompany that being made through the ongoing political processes, namely, determining the fate of persons missing since the time of the conflict. Although the Joint Working Group on Missing Persons continues to meet regularly and reflects a spirit of increasing mutual respect and cooperation, much information vital to the resolution of missing persons cases from both sides is still lacking. More serious efforts to locate and provide such information are needed from each side, which in turn requires a more substantial commitment at the political level. Without such commitments, progress on an issue crucial for reconciliation will continue to be unacceptably slow.

The 19 April agreement represents a major achievement and a decisive step forward for both Belgrade and Pristina, which should contribute to the peaceful solution of issues that have long divided the parties. Energetic and cogent facilitation by the High Representative of the European Union has been fundamental to obtaining that result. No less fundamental have been the political will and leadership demonstrated by the parties, who, in their aspirations

to join Europe, have assumed historic responsibility for difficult but necessary compromises.

The agreement sets a course that will be neither sure nor swift. In that respect, my sincere hope is that the membership of the Security Council, indeed the international community as a whole, will continue to provide its resolute support to progress. The situation on the ground, including the domestic political situation on both sides, remains fragile, and it cannot be taken for granted that the progress being achieved now is irreversible or that it is simply assured.

The implementation of the agreements reached in the EU-facilitated process will require continued hard work by the parties and the active support of the international community. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is making efforts to ensure that its activities, including its own supporting role on the ground, contribute to the creation, in close coordination with international partners, of an enabling environment for the implementation of the Agreement.

I wish to express deep appreciation to the members of the Council for their continuing political engagement with the parties, as well as my hope that such an engagement will remain steadfast throughout the coming delicate and challenging period.

I conclude by thanking you, Mr. President, and all members of the Council for your support to UNMIK and for promoting the shared objectives of political progress, peace and reconciliation on the ground.

The President: I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for the efforts he has made and the commitment he has shown in addressing the problems on the ground.

Upon careful study of the report (S/2013/254) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for the period 16 January to 22 April this year, I very much regret having to say that the report highlights some important security challenges. The security situation in the north of Kosovo is still very fragile, and frequent incidents are of particular concern. According to the data available to us, 60 ethnically motivated attacks were registered in the first four months of 2013, 20 more than in the same period last year. I also must bring to the Council's attention the ethnically motivated low-grade crimes, such as threats, intimidation and theft. Even if such crimes often go unreported, they are no less effective as a means of applying pressure than are physical attacks. Moreover, their numbers are on the rise.

In the reporting period, Serbia repeatedly showed its willingness to make an active contribution to overcoming the problems that have accumulated. Our principal goal is to achieve a sustainable solution that will help everybody in Kosovo and Metohija, on the one hand, and preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia, on the other. Serbia will continue to care about the Serbian people of Kosovo and Metohija and to make efforts to ensure the safe return and sustainable livelihood of Serbian citizens living there. We are convinced that, even though that is a very difficult path, it is the best way to overcome the legacies of the past.

Since the formation of the new Government of the Republic of Serbia, eleven rounds of political dialogue have been held in Brussels through the mediation efforts of Baroness Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The next round of negotiations is scheduled for 20 June. During the dialogue my country invested considerable efforts and demonstrated great flexibility, which was recognized by many international officials, including Baroness Ashton herself. In furthering the process, Serbia will continue to be guided by the firm belief that the negotiations may lead to a solution acceptable to all that will be a solid basis for building lasting peace and achieving full security for all people living in Serbia's southern province.

The six-month political dialogue resulted in the "First agreement on principles governing normalization of relations". The Republic of Serbia is determined to implement the agreement. At the same time, allow me to point out that this is the first agreement reached between Belgrade and Pristina, as negotiations on a whole range of important topics — such as the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the protection of

cultural and religious sites, the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and property rights, as well as the modalities for the implementation of the agreement — are yet to be broached by the two sides.

The Republic of Serbia has great expectations of future meetings of the teams for the elaboration of agreement implementation plans. My country deems that it is very important that the agreed provisions for the implementation of the agreement should be put into practice, reflecting the will and intentions of the negotiators who initialled the Brussels agreement, and that by the same token the status of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija should be defined in very clear terms.

Let me also recall that the first agreement provides for the establishment of the "Association/Community" of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo and Metohija. The Community will be invested with many important responsibilities in the fields of economic development, education, health and urban and rural planning. The ethnic structure of the police and the judiciary will be respected in the territory of the Community, while the future Pristina armed forces will not be allowed to enter the North without the permission of the Kosovo Force (KFOR).

The survival of the Serbian population in the province, both north and south of the Ibar River, is linked directly to its physical security. Since June 1999 and the arrival of the international civil and military presence in Kosovo and Metohija, almost 7,000 physical attacks have been registered in which 1,262 persons, 1,037 of them Serbs and non-Albanians, have been killed and 1,818 injured. Out of the 427 towns and villages in which Serbs lived prior to 1999, 311 have been completely ethnically cleansed. Serbs do not live there any more, but we want to believe that, over time, conditions will be created for their return. In particular, it is necessary that they be encouraged to return, which can be achieved only by creating conditions for the physical and economic sustainability of returnee communities throughout Kosovo and Metohija. A sustainable IDP return would provide an opportunity to create a multi-ethnic Kosovo and Metohija.

It is with regret that I have to say that the process of IDP returns to Kosovo and Metohija has been very slow and difficult to sustain. The returnees are supported in word rather than in deed; they are eventually left to their own devices and face attacks by local communities. They ask the Republic of Serbia for support or to return to the place of displacement. Admittedly, it may be too much to expect that the returnees will be welcome in the communities to which they return, yet there is no doubt that the relevant Kosovo and Metohija institutions are obliged to provide at least basic living conditions, such as physical security.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 22,982 persons have returned to Kosovo and Metohija since 1999, only 42.6 per cent of them from the Serbian community. According to our data, there have been only about 4,000 so-called sustainable returnees in the past 14 years. Particularly worrisome is the fact that 47 returnees from minority communities were registered in the first quarter of 2013, nearly half as many as in the same period in 2012, when 87 returnees to Kosovo and Metohija were registered.

Of particular interest are the assessments contained in the report of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Kosovo and Metohija from October 2012, in which it is contended that the

> "absence of a sustainable solution for approximately 235,000 displaced persons (DPs) from Kosovo continues to pose a major challenge for all concerned".

UNHCR in Geneva intends to end the financing of programmes for IDPs in Serbia. Even though the amount of $2.8 million earmarked for IDPs is to be approved in September, regrettably no donor has yet to pledge any money for the UNHCR fund for IDPs from Kosovo and Metohija. I take this opportunity to call on all to continue to help the displaced persons, as many as 96,000 of whom live below the poverty line.

The process of return has been made more difficult by the fact that the system of the rule of law in Kosovo and Metohija suffers serious shortcomings and has been unable to provide proper protection against repeated human rights violations, in particular the violations of the rights of minorities. That is confirmed also in the report of the European Court of Auditors from October 2012, in which it is said that, even though Kosovo is the largest per capita recipient of financial aid in the world, this assistance has not been sufficiently effective to establish a proper system of the rule of law. The report states that the European Union has helped Kosovo to build certain capacities in the field of the rule of law,

but that the reach of the assistance to police and the judiciary has been limited.

The position of the European Court of Auditors is corroborated by the fact that the practice of arresting members of the Serbian community continues unabated and without explanation as to who is responsible and the legal basis on which the contentious warrants are being issued. This in no way helps to build confidence or a sense of security within the Serbian population.

The presence of the international community in the field is of decisive importance to the implementation of all agreements. We therefore consider that the United Nations should continue to coordinate the work of the international organizations acting in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija under its auspices and that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) should continue to carry out its mandate and ensure that missions in Kosovo and Metohija act exclusively within a status-neutral framework as provided for by resolution 1244 (1999).

We have learned from experience that the role of UNMIK in stabilizing the situation in the region is irreplaceable. Although we understand the reasons for the planned budget restrictions, we believe that its present mandate must remain unchanged, its activity enhanced, and its cooperation with the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) made more efficient.

Of all institutions in Kosovo and Metohija, the minority communities trust UNMIK the most, since its political team addresses sensitive issues of exceptional importance to the Serbian community, including the protection of cultural heritage, raising the level of legal and security protection, and the implementation of the right to free return and reconciliation. We therefore believe that, rather than be reduced, the UNMIK political team should be strengthened as we enter an even more sensitive period in which we shall be called upon to implement agreements on these important issues.

Of particular concern is the situation relating to the suspension of the financing of the UNMIK Administration in Mitrovica by the provisional institutions of self-government and the establishment of the so-called Mitrovica North Administration Office without consultations or agreement with the Serbian side or UNMIK, which is tantamount to an attempt to take over the existing competencies of the Administration in Mitrovica. I recall that the Administration in Mitrovica was established in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999) and that its responsibilities and concrete powers are defined in UNMIK Administrative Direction No. 2007/12, by which the legitimacy of governance is extended to the Municipality of Mitrovica by establishing, on a temporary basis, UNMIK's direct administrative responsibility for the northern part of the municipality.

Nonetheless, the UNMIK Administration in Mitrovica continues to perform functions in mediation, reconciliation and conflict prevention, as pointed out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/254), in which it is also said that the Mitrovica North Administration Office cannot exercise effective jurisdiction in the north of the province. Therefore, we expect that the question of the Administration financing will be resolved soon.

Well aware of the magnitude and importance of the task ahead of us. We have invested enormous efforts and harnessed all our potentials with the aim of achieving an agreement in order to make the life of all in the province easier and to bring us closer to lasting reconciliation. I must therefore bring to the attention of the Security Council that, even though they comply with all procedures, the officials and renowned public figures of the Republic of Serbia continue to have access to and stay in Kosovo and Metohija, belying the fact that the so-called institutions of independent Kosovo continue not only to violate their right to freedom of movement but call into question their readiness to reach an agreement.

Even though we understand that, unlike in Belgrade, considerable political forces exist in Pristina that are opposed to any agreement whatsoever, we cannot understand the absence of response in cases of violation not only of laws, but of basic civilizational norms. We understand, for instance, that the devastated Serbian cemetery in southern Mitrovica can never be restored to its previous state, but we do not understand why nothing is being done to bring the perpetrators of the vandalism to justice or to prevent future devastations or restore the cemetery. Surely, we would insist on such measures being taken in northern Mitrovica had the local Muslim cemetery ever been desecrated, which has not been the case. The attacks against the Serbian Orthodox Church, its facilities and clergy and the plundering of churches and monasteries continue unabated. Although all of the cases have been reported in a timely manner to the Kosovo police and KFOR, no report on the investigation results has been received in

any particular case and no perpetrator has ever been apprehended. Such attacks are tolerated even in the case of an attempt to protect the Serbian heritage, such as the Supreme Court of Kosovo's decision confirming the ownership of the Dečani Monastery by the Serbian Orthodox Church. The demonstrations at Dečani were organized after that decision by the Self-Determination Movement and officials of the Dečani municipality and ended only after KFOR intervention. That protest is just another example of the instigation to ethnic hatred and religious intolerance by Albanian extremists and another reason why KFOR should stay in Kosovo and Metohija. I thank the United States for its decision not to reduce its contingent.

I would like to highlight the question of the Serbian cultural heritage and religious sites in Kosovo and Metohija, which will be one of the topics of future negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina. In that context, the establishment of a specialized, multi-ethnic unit for the protection of cultural heritage and religious sites within the Kosovo police is a positive, but insufficient step in the right direction of providing additional guarantees for the security of the cultural heritage and religious sites in Kosovo and Metohija, especially because the Serbian population and Orthodox clergy do not trust the Kosovo police.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia also has no confidence in the privatization carried out by the Kosovo Privatization Agency, formally the Kosovo Trust Agency. We deem the process to contravene international and European conventions on human rights, since it disregards the rights of the legal owners. Let us recall that the Republic of Serbia invested billions of dollars in public companies in Kosovo and Metohija over many decades, and, as a guarantor, continues to pay international creditors the instalment payments for loans taken out to help companies in Kosovo and Metohija. The rights of workers in non-majority communities, especially the IDPs, who are to receive part of the proceeds from the sale of such companies, are threatened by the privatization.

The privatization of public and State-owned companies in Serbian communities is also of particular concern. The sale of those companies to persons of Albanian nationality, with capital of suspect origin, have resulted in the loss of economic resources in these communities and is instrumental in stepping up the exodus of the Serbian population from Kosovo and Metohija for economic reasons and owing to the lack of security.

In the previous political process, my country, notwithstanding the unilateral nature of the declaration of independence of Kosovo, granted a limited international status and legitimacy to the provisional institutions of self-government in Pristina. It considers, however, that negotiations at a high political level should be conducted without addressing the question of the international and State legal status of the provisional institutions in Pristina. The goal is to establish administrative organs in the province that will be respected by all of the parties included in the process, with formal, legal and political guarantees at the level of the province and the international community for the political, territorial and other rights of national communities throughout the territory of Kosovo and Metohija.

The Republic of Serbia has already demonstrated its openness to dialogue and will maximize its efforts to overcome the current difficulties in the relations between the Serbian and Albanian peoples. The unreduced presence of UNMIK is of paramount importance for our efforts in order to ensure the effective advice of the Security Council and the United Nations, which play an irreplaceable role in providing legitimacy to the comprehensive solution.

It is evident that, owing to the long-standing problems presented in the report of the Secretary-General, the non-majority population in the province has concerns. The respect for human and minority rights, the protection of the interests, life, cultural and religious heritage of all citizens alike, as well as the full implementation of the European standards in all areas are the goals for which we intend to fight with determination and resolve. We believe, that, by insisting on those values, the Balkans can overcome its past and use its multi-ethnicity as a precious asset, which it is, rather than as a source of conflict. Despite all of those problems, historic progress has undoubtedly been made in the period between the two meetings of the Security Council dealing with Belgrade-Pristina relations. Much more courage is needed to talk peace, much less to begin a war.

Serbia is resolved to commit the past to the past, which we know we cannot change. What we can do though is to shape our present and our future. At this historic moment, we expect the international

community to give an impetus to the implementation of the agreement and the building of regional stability. That is the support that I expect from members of the Security Council and from the Council of the European Union, which is expected to decide on the opening of the European Union membership negotiations.

I would also like to use this opportunity to encourage the authorities in Pristina to find a compromise and a common language in the interests of our people and our common future. Many meetings of the Security Council have been convened to discuss wars, sanctions and bombings in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. It is now time that we convened meetings to discuss the consolidation of peace and the better future of our people.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Thaçi.

Mr. Thaçi (*spoke in Albanian; English text provided by delegation*): It is a special pleasure to address the Council again today and to describe key developments in Kosovo over the past three months, which owing to to their political importance make this period much more special.

At the outset let me express our sincere gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his continuing support for peace and progress in Kosovo and the Balkans.

During the past three months we have had some specific historic developments. The most important event was the signing of the peace agreement and the normalization of relations between the countries of Kosovo and Serbia with EU facilitation. In parallel, the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo have maintained political and economic stability, continued to promote and protect the rights and interests of all communities, improved the socioeconomic situation in the country and significantly advanced our European perspective.

After ten rounds of high-level political dialogue, on 19 April the historic first inter-State agreement was reached between the Republic of Kosovo and Serbia, mediated by European Union (EU) High Representative Baroness Catherine Ashton. That preliminary agreement and the political dialogue had their beginning in discussions in the General Assembly in autumn 2010, and we are proud that we have managed to implement it completely.

The Republic of Kosovo has consistently offered unwavering support and commitment to political dialogue with Serbia and the agreement by taking all measures to ensure its political acceptance in Kosovo and its effective implementation. The Kosovo Parliament voted for it by a two-thirds majority. The citizens of Kosovo have also welcomed the agreement and expressed their hope that it will serve peace, stability and prosperity in Kosovo. Our Kosovo Serb partners in the ruling coalition have also been part of the dialogue process and strongly supported the agreement reached. It has also received broad support from the international community.

I would also like to commend the efforts of my counterpart, Prime Minister Ivica Dačić of Serbia, for his serious efforts and commitment to reaching this important landmark for our two peoples and the countries in the region. In that context, the facilitation of the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia has led to gains for both Serbia and Kosovo; they have gained and the region has gained.

In that respect, the facilitation of the dialogue by EU High Representative Ashton and the agreement reached under her leadership represent a significant achievement for the EU's foreign policy, an important achievement that will serve to stabilize the entire region. The bilateral agreement between Kosovo and Serbia is important beyond the Western Balkans, because it has created an environment for the EU member States that enables the full recognition of the independence of Kosovo.

The agreement contains 15 provisions that regulate key aspects of the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. The agreement is also in line with the Kosovo Constitution. The agreement opens the way for establishing stability in the north through a fundamental transformation of the current security situation and the political and economic conditions. The agreement also opens the way for Kosovo to attain full international recognition and membership in international bodies.

One of the main aspects of the agreement is to establish an association that will perform several functions related to local economic development, education, health, and urban and rural planning. We agreed that the powers of that association will be in accordance with the Constitution of Kosovo, the Law on Local Self-Government and the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The association will be an integral part of Kosovo institutions and as such will

work closely with the central Government in exercising its activities.

Since the beginning of the dialogue, the Republic of Kosovo has been convinced that there can be no normalization of the situation in the north while Serbia operates illegal parallel structures, which it refuses to dismantle. The agreement provides an implementation plan specifying that by mid-July 2013 Serbia will close all of its security premises in Kosovo and cease providing them financial support.

The agreement provides that the Kosovo Police will be the only legal and legitimate police authority in northern Kosovo. A regional police commander will be nominated by the association and selected by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Kosovo. With these provisions, the rule of law will finally be strengthened in the north of Kosovo, and law enforcement authorities will cooperate more effectively.

The agreement confirms the unitary legal system of the Republic of Kosovo as the sole legal authority with jurisdiction in the country. The timely integration of Kosovo-Serb judicial authorities within the legal and judiciary system of Kosovo is essential, and we believe that the composition of the judicial system will increase community trust in Kosovo's courts, improve inter-ethnic relations, and, above all, establish the rule of law in the north that has been absent for the past 14 years.

Another important aspect of the agreement is the organization of municipal elections in the north of Kosovo in October 2013 in parallel with the Kosovo-wide municipal elections. Those elections will be held in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and in accordance with the laws of Kosovo and international standards. The organization of the municipal elections and the formation of new governing structures will strengthen the legitimacy of the institutions of Kosovo at the local level.

Another important provision of the agreement is the mutual agreement that neither party will block, or encourage others to block, progress by the other party on the path to EU integration. That mutual assurance is a promising provision that supports the hope that the European integration path for both countries will be smooth and swift, based on fair conditions and individual merits.

Prior to the agreement, Kosovo and Serbia had signed a number of technical agreements on the freedom of movement of people and goods, on applying integrated border management along the inter-State border, on customs services, and on exchanging liaison offices between capitals as the first step towards establishing diplomatic relations. Those agreements have undoubtedly improved the political, economic and social conditions in Kosovo, Serbia and the broader region.

The implementation of integrated border management between the Republic of Kosovo and Serbia has continued in the recent months. At the same time, the agreement on exchanging liaison offices between Kosovo and Serbia has led to steady progress in finding a joint solution to the issues of representation, mandate, composition, immunities and protection of personnel and communication.

In that context, for the first time, the Republic of Kosovo will be represented in Belgrade at the ambassadorial level by a member of the Kosovo Diplomatic Service. That step marks a historic turning point in official communication between two countries, given the fact that the liaison offices will have a unique role in creating mutual trust beyond the institutional context.

Without detracting from the historic importance of the signing of the agreement, the implementation of that agreement is essential for Serbia, Kosovo and the Serbs in Kosovo. The coming months will be crucial in that regard.

The Kosovo Government, public institutions and political actors of all kinds in the country are committed to implementing the agreement, which will open the way for the integration and normalization of northern Kosovo and for the improvement of relations with Serbia by opening a new chapter of cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding. We affirm our determination to take, as a matter of priority, all technical and political steps needed to ensure the timely and constructive implementation of all aspects of the agreement.

We also expect Serbia to maintain a steady course of progress in fulfilling its obligations and working closely with local Serbs in the north to persuade them to accept and implement the agreement. We count on the support of the member States of the European Union and the wider international community in implementing the agreement in order to attain Kosovo's full international

recognition and membership in the United Nations and other international and regional bodies.

Over the past three months, the Republic of Kosovo has maintained political and economic stability and a safe environment for all its citizens; improved institutional performance; strengthened the rule of law; accelerated efforts and investments to protect communities and their religious freedoms; and has worked to enhance the socioeconomic conditions and social inclusion of various social groups in Kosovo.

In recent months, the stream of international recognition of Kosovo's independence and statehood has continued. In the last few days and weeks, Kosovo has been recognized by Tanzania, Yemen and Guyana. We have also intensified regional participation and membership in various European bodies, such as the European Investment Bank.

The timely and effective implementation of the agreement is essential to establishing security, the rule of law and order in the north of Kosovo, as well as to reducing the criminal activity and economic informality that have been rife in that part of Kosovo under the control of parallel structures for the past 14 years.

The Government of Kosovo has upheld its commitment to protect and promote the rights of communities by providing institutional, political, economic and social support. Kosovo security institutions have increased their efforts to provide additional security to Serbian Orthodox Churches and other heritage sites. In March 2013, the Kosovo Police created a special task force comprising 207 police officers, coming from all communities, who provide 24-hour security for Serb religious and cultural sites. So far, there have been no reports of incidents against the Serbian Orthodox heritage in Kosovo.

Moreover, during this period Kosovo has also maintained economic stability, continued the privatization of publicly owned enterprises and expanded the scope of foreign direct investments. Likewise, the Kosovo Assembly has continued its legislative work and adopted 10 new laws regulating a range of economic, judicial and public administration issues.

Kosovo's path towards European Union integration has shown steady progress. EU integration is a national priority, representing our agenda of modernization and political transformation. As a result of Kosovo's constructive engagement in ongoing dialogue and in fulfilment of European requirements, Kosovo is on track to sign this year a Stabilization and Association Agreement and benefit from visa liberalization.

On 22 April, the European Commission recommended the opening of negotiations for signing a Stabilization and Association Agreement with Kosovo, which opens the prospects for establishing contractual relations between the Republic of Kosovo and the European Union. In less than two weeks, the European Council will take a decision on approving the negotiations for signing such an Agreement between the EU and Kosovo.

The EU report represents the first and most important political assessment of Kosovo's progress in its path towards EU integration. The report acknowledges that Kosovo has met all four short-term priorities in the area of public administration, the rule of law, minority protection and trade, and recommends to the EU Parliament and Council that negotiations for the signing of a Stabilization and Association Agreement with Kosovo be opened.

Last but not least, following the important developments in recent months and the overall political, economic, social and inter-ethnic progress in Kosovo, it is our firm conviction that it is time for the Council to consider closing the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the near future, which will contribute to the process under way in Kosovo, create space for local ownership, preserve the credibility of the United Nations and its role in the past in Kosovo, and ultimately reduce unnecessary financial costs, which could be used by United Nations agencies in Kosovo for more important socioeconomic development projects or in other crisis situations.

The agreement between Kosovo and Serbia represents a significant milestone and opportunity for the Council to consider adopting a new resolution to end the UNMIK mandate in Kosovo; show support for the first agreement, mutually agreed upon by Kosovo and Serbia; provide support for the EU to monitor the implementation of the agreement, and show support for the full functioning of both parties as independent neighbours and responsible members of the international community.

Let me conclude by reiterating the unwavering dedication and perseverance of the Kosovo Government

and its people in continuing to make Kosovo successful and prosperous, rejecting the legacy of the past and joining the community of free and peaceful nations at the regional and international levels. The agreement between Kosovo and Serbia represents a crucial and historic moment for improving the relations between Kosovo and Serbia as two independent States with a historic opportunity to pave the way for good-neighbourly relations in the EU integration process. Both sides have had to make some compromises, which are ultimately in the best interests of the citizens of Kosovo and their future within the unitary and functioning State of Kosovo. However, the timely and effective implementation of the agreement will determine the success and normalization of inter-State relations. Good intentions should be translated into visible actions. Members of the Council and the wider international community should support the effective implementation of the agreement.

Mr. Kim Sook (Republic of Korea): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his insightful briefing. I would also like to welcome Prime Minister Ivica Dačić and Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi back to the Council today.

Since the last Council meeting on this issue in March (see S/PV.6939), there have been constructive developments in the political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The Republic of Korea congratulates both sides on reaching the historic agreement of 19 April within the framework of a dialogue facilitated by the European Union (EU). The agreement is a major breakthrough in the normalization of relations and also represents a big step forward for regional peace and security. In that regard, we commend both Prime Ministers for demonstrating their political courage and taking a flexible approach to finding compromise. We also applaud the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Catherine Ashton, for her tireless efforts and personal dedication in facilitating this ground-breaking agreement.

What is required now is the full and effective implementation of the agreement on the ground. In that vein, it is encouraging that a new round of technical talks on the implementation has already begun in Brussels. However, the path to full implementation could be easily littered with serious obstacles. The biggest challenge at this juncture is the strong resistance and scepticism of ethnic Serbs living in northern Kosovo. Taking into consideration that the 19 April agreement primarily concerns the status of the four municipalities in northern Kosovo, implementation simply cannot work without their cooperation. Therefore, we would like to emphasize that it should be carried out in an inclusive and participatory manner that allows the full participation of Kosovo Serbs. It is also imperative that all police and judicial authorities in northern Kosovo be integrated into Kosovo's institutional framework, as both sides have agreed.

However, genuine sustainable reconciliation cannot be achieved overnight. The old tensions are still far from fading. Lingering mistrust presents huge obstacles to a constructive dialogue. This is all the more reason why the political dialogue must be complemented by confidence-building measures. In our meeting in March, we suggested educational initiatives and an awareness-raising campaign as effective confidence-building measures, and today I am please to note that the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/254) describes some meaningful progress in the educational sector.

We believe that instilling the values of tolerance and inter-ethnic understanding in future generations is the first step towards restoring trust among communities. We therefore call on both sides to further strengthen their efforts to promote intercultural education and to facilitate interchange among students. Furthermore, Kosovo must uphold its commitment to ensuring the full safety of all ethnic minorities. Without it, people will find it difficult to have a sense of safety, trust and confidence in their system.

In that context, a series of incidents targeting the staff of the Mitrovica North Administrative Office and attacks on returnees continue to be of particular concern. We condemn such attacks. We also call on the Kosovo authorities to redouble their efforts to better protect all ethnic minority communities.

Finally, the Republic of Korea would like to commend Special Representative Zarif and the entire team of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We hope that UNMIK will further strengthen its close cooperation with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Kosovo Force and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, thereby making a substantial contribution to lasting peace and genuine reconciliation in Kosovo.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing. I welcome the presence of the Prime Minister of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, at today's meeting. I have also listened carefully to the statement made by Mr. Thaçi.

China has always held that resolution 1244 (1999) is an important legal basis for resolving the question of Kosovo. Efforts to resolve that issue should be carried out within the framework of that resolution. It is up to the parties to find a mutually acceptable settlement through dialogue and negotiation. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia should be fully respected.

China welcomes the recent rounds of the high-level political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, at which positive results have been achieved. We encourage both parties to continue to move the pragmatic and constructive dialogue forward in an effort to find a long-term solution to the question of Kosovo so as to maintain the peace and stability of the Balkans and Europe at large.

The security situation in Kosovo remains calm, but the northern part of Kosovo remains tense. In that connection, we express our concern. The parties concerned must take action to effectively protect the legitimate rights of the different ethnic groups of Kosovo, to adopt a prudent approach and to adhere to dialogue to resolve their differences. It is important to avoid any actions that might complicate and escalate the current situation.

China commends the work carried out by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We support UNMIK's continued efforts to implement the Council's mandate. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force will strengthen their cooperation and coordination and work in synergy so as to play an active and constructive role in facilitating a solution to the Kosovo question.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/254) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Developments that can be described as historic have taken place since the last debate of the Security Council devoted to UNMIK (see S/PV.6939). On 19 April, after the tenth round of talks, a first tentative agreement governing the normalization of relations was reached in the high-level political commitment under the auspices of the European Union. This agreement is a milestone for reconciliation between the two countries, which share a painful past marked by the atrocities of war. Like leaders of other countries in the region before them, the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo were able to act based primarily on the firm commitment of their people to rejoining the European family.

Luxembourg can only welcome the political vision and leadership shown by the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo. As a member of the European Union, Luxembourg also welcomes the role played by the Union, in particular the personal commitment and considerable efforts of its High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Catherine Ashton, who has been able to facilitate and lead sensitive and difficult negotiations.

By adopting at the end of May the plan to implement the provisions of the historic agreement of 19 April, the Serbian and Kosovo Governments confirmed their desire to normalize their relations in order to realize their European perspective. Negotiations are now under way in Brussels on the practical details of the implementation. Luxembourg encourages both parties to continue to uphold the spirit of compromise in order to achieve tangible and visible results in the implementation of the April 19 agreement, even before the European Council meets on 27 and 28 June in Brussels.

My country is ready to continue to support the efforts of the two countries and their leaders to achieve their common goal. Luxembourg remains strongly committed to the stability, the development of the rule of law and socio-economic development of Kosovo, through its participation in KFOR and EULEX and through a substantial bilateral cooperation programme.

In his report, the Secretary-General reported on a situation that has remained generally calm, but with transient tensions in multi-ethnic areas as well as in northern Mitrovica. The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the Kosovo Force

have responded, in close collaboration with the Kosovo police, by increasing the visibility of their regular patrols and strengthening other preventive measures in the sector.

We also commend the efforts of the Kosovo authorities to establish, in cooperation with EULEX, a multi-ethnic police unit that is responsible for the protection of religious and historical sites. The unit will play a key role in preventing a repeat of the vandalism, in January, of Serbian Orthodox sites role.

To conclude, let me reiterate the profound conviction of Luxembourg to see the future of Kosovo, and that of Serbia, form part of a decidedly European perspective. A long road toward peace and stability has been achieved since UNMIK was established in 1999. It must therefore continue.

Mr. Briens (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing and Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minster of Serbia, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo, for their statements.

The Security Council is meeting for the first time since the historic agreement of 19 April was achieved between Serbia and Kosovo under the auspices of the European Union. The agreement lays the bases for normalized relations that will contribute to regional stability and enable the people to turn towards their future, the development of their countries and their European prospects. We commend the Serb and Kosovo authorities, particularly the two Prime Ministers, who have been personally committed to that difficult exercise, for their determination and courage. Their statements before the Council today represent a new demonstration of their spirit of cooperation. We call upon them to ensure the swift implementation of the agreement, pursuant to the road map of 22 May.

Serbia must steadily dismantle the parallel sovereign structures that it maintains in the north, pursuant to its commitment. For its part, Kosovo must provide the future community of majority-Serb areas with substantive autonomy, as provided for in the 19 April agreement, in order to reassure the northern Serbian population and allow it to find its lasting place in Kosovo.

Generally speaking, it is clearly important to ensure that the rights of the various communities throughout the territory, especially concerning their cultural and religious heritage, are protected. The two parties must work to successfully achieve the municipal elections scheduled in the autumn, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The previously concluded agreements must also be fully implemented.

If the conclusions reached by the European Council at its December 2012 meeting are met, by the end of June new milestones on the two countries' paths to Europe — including the launching of negotiations with Serbia on accession to the European Union and a stabilization and association agreement with Kosovo — could be reached.

The international community must acknowledge those positive developments and cast off the paradigms of a bygone era. Kosovo has now been recognized by the majority of the States Members of the Organization, reflecting the reality of a State that aspires to good relations with its neighbours and peaceful integration within its region and to find its proper place in the international community.

As the European Union, NATO and the OSCE adjust their presence on the ground, we encourage the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to do the same with a view to promoting peaceful conduct, in cooperation with the Kosovo authorities, while avoiding the undue influence of those who champion the status quo. In that context, I wish to thank the Special Representative and the UNMIK actors for their efforts.

It is also essential that the Kosovo authorities actively cooperate with the Special Representative of the European Union, Mr. Žbogar, and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), as they carry out crucial work to implement the dialogue agreements between Belgrade and Pristina and combat corruption, organized crime and impunity for the most heinous crimes, including alleged trafficking in organs. All parties must respect the freedom of movement of troops and personnel deployed under the Kosovo Force and EULEX.

France remains committed to the reality of a sovereign, peaceful, democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo living in peace with its neighbours. It believes that Serbia must become one of the pillars of stability in the Balkans. Today, we have inched a bit closer to those two goals.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): Let me start by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/254) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We also welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Prime Minister of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, and thank him and Mr. Thaçi for their statements.

The position of Azerbaijan with regard to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and the non-recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence remains unchanged. Resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be the binding international legal basis for a comprehensive settlement to the political process and negotiations.

Azerbaijan welcomes the progress made at the meeting of the parties on 19 April in Brussels, facilitated by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, where they reached a landmark agreement on the principles governing the normalization of relations. We encourage both sides to remain further committed to reaching agreement on the contentious issues through mutually acceptable solutions. That is indispensable to the security, stability and well-being of the region.

UNMIK's activities are of great importance.

The Mission's ongoing collaboraton with all other stakeholders to enhance the prospects of success in the political dialogue is noteworthy. UNMIK should continue to play its key role in ensuring the coordination of all international efforts on its status-neutral framework, as envisaged in resolution 1244 (1999).

The general calm that was observed in the overall security situation during the reporting period is a welcome development. However, repeated incidents of violence in northern Mitrovica constituted exceptions to the general security environment. It is necessary that these incidents be duly investigated.

The voluntary return of internally displaced persons to Kosovo again showed few signs of improvement during the reporting period. We commend the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in monitoring the process and implementing the necessary policies towards facilitation of their return. We agree with the Secretary-General that the promotion of reconciliation and increased trust among the communities in Kosovo is as important as the achievement of success in the political process. Therefore, it should be underlined once again that the preservation of the region's rich cultural diversity and spiritual heritage on the basis of ethnic and religious tolerance is indispensable.

In conclusion, I would like to commend UNMIK, under the leadership of Mr. Zarif, for its efforts and important role in maintaining peace and stability in Kosovo and the entire region.

Mr. Manzi (Rwanda): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing. I welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia and Mr. Hashim Thaçi of Kosovo. We welcome their presence here today and their statements.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2013/254) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) highlights the challenges to its long-term presence and security in Kosovo, but the report also highlights the agreement between Belgrade and Pristina. Rwanda welcomes this historic agreement governing the normalization of relations, reached in the framework facilitated by the European Union. Serbia and Kosovo have proved that they can both focus on the future rather than stay entangled in the past.

Indeed, Rwanda believes that it is in the common interest of both countries to close that dark chapter of their history and continue with serious negotiations. I deeply appreciate the role of the European Union, especially its continued efforts to maintain the momentum of peaceful dialogue between the two countries. It is evident to us in the active, skilful and sustainable involvement of the High Representative of the European Union, who has stewarded that sensitive and delicate negotiation towards a landmark agreement. Rwanda strongly believes that it is through dialogue that the long-term normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina can meaningfully flourish. The step taken by the parties is a cornerstone in their history, and there should be no turning back. We therefore call on both sides to maintain open channels of communication and involve all stakeholders as the process moves towards full realization.

This important step on the part of both leaders indicates that they are looking forward to a better

future for their countries. We call on the international community to give full support to the parties on their journey to implement this agreement. The Council responding with one voice in support of this agreement would be a key contribution to the realization and implementation of the agreement, but of course both parties should continue to demonstrate their political while and sincere desire in the continuation of the dialogue that will bring lasting peace.

On the security situation, my delegation is concerned about the tensions in Kosovo. We call upon leaders, in collaboration with the international presence, to engage opinion leaders in the concerned communities in finding a peaceful solution to the cause of this tension. We welcome the ongoing cooperation on cultural heritage projects. Despite recent violence caused by the acts of a few extremists, Rwanda remains optimistic that Kosovo and Serbia can eventually resolve their differences.

I commend the collaboration between UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) in the area of the rule of law and its technical cooperation with the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs. In particular, we commend the efforts undertaken by EULEX in monitoring and advising the rule of law sector.

Regarding human rights, Rwanda stresses that it is crucial to protect the human rights of minorities. The protection of their religious values as cultural heritage is crucial for the stability of Kosovo and the region. Rwanda welcomes the establishment of a specialized unit for the protection of cultural heritage and religious sites.

My delegation welcomes the drafting of the Kosovo Strategy and Action Plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

I welcome the cooperation between UNMIK and other international organizations in implementing the United Nations mandate. We urge the international community to maintain its commitment to increasing its assistance to the parties in order to achieve lasting peace. However, we remain convinced that the task of building a stable and prosperous Kosovo and Serbia is the primary responsibility of both countries themselves. We therefore call upon the two countries to strengthen their cooperation with UNMIK.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to stress that the achievement of peace in Kosovo lies in the hands of both parties, Kosovo and Serbia, themselves. My delegation therefore urges both sides to continue in the same spirit of determination and compromise in the implementation and realization of the historical agreement.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): The United States warmly welcomes both Prime Minister Dačić and Prime Minister Thaçi back to the Council and congratulates them on reaching the landmark 19 April agreement on principles for the normalization of relations. We commend the European Union, especially High Representative Ashton, for their continued engagement and leadership on this important issue.

The historic 19 April agreement strengthens Kosovo and Serbia's futures as multi-ethnic democracies based on the rule of law and respect for human rights and as neighbours on the path towards European integration. The United States applauds both Governments for their political courage and commitment to making the hard decisions to achieve this significant milestone, which holds the potential to significantly enhance stability in the region. We welcome the Prime Minister's agreement on an associated implementation plan and time line, and look forward to the agreement's timely and full implementation.

It will be important for both Governments to cooperate with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Kosovo Force and other partners to advance implementation and ensure safety and security during the transition phase. We encourage the legislatures of Serbia and Kosovo to take all necessary steps in support of this agreement.

The agreement provides a durable solution for northern Kosovo within Kosovo's legal and institutional framework, and reaffirms far-reaching municipal self-governance for ethnic Serbs and other communities living in the north. Free, fair and orderly municipal elections this fall will be an essential step on this path, and we commend the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for its work with the Government of Kosovo to facilitate this electoral process.

At the same time, however, we are concerned about the threats of violence and irresponsible rhetoric from hardliners who are personally vested in maintaining the status quo. We encourage both Governments to explain the agreement and its benefits to their citizens.

We hope that the residents of northern Kosovo will take note of Prime Minister Dačić's appeal to accept and support the agreement, and we welcome the assurances of President Jahjaga and Prime Minister Thaçi that all citizens' rights will be protected. We applaud the remarkable progress Kosovo has achieved, including in reforming its justice sector and economy.

The new criminal code, the new code of criminal procedure and the restructuring of the courts are major steps forward. Kosovo's standby arrangement with the International Monetary Fund is meeting performance benchmarks, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development just approved its country strategy for Kosovo.

We are also pleased to note that over half of all States Members of the United Nations now recognize Kosovo.

The United States stands with Kosovo as a partner and friend and looks forward to deepening our partnership in the years to come. Serbia is also a long-time partner of the United States, and we welcome Prime Minister Dačić's productive trade mission to the United States in May.

By resolving political differences through dialogue and compromise, Kosovo and Serbia have collectively set a noteworthy and constructive example for the region. We look forward to continued progress by both countries and their societies on reforms and boosting economic growth.

Lastly, let me take this opportunity to reiterate our strong support for the commendable efforts of Kosovo and Serbia to further their cooperation which remains the optimal path to peace and prosperity.

Ms. King (Australia): Allow me to express Australia's appreciation to Special Representative Zarif for his presentation this morning and for his continuing efforts and those of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and in the region. I also welcome Prime Minister Thaçi and Prime Minister Dačić and thank them for their statements.

We welcome the first agreement between Serbia and Kosovo of principles governing the normalization of relations, initialled on 19 April and subsequently approved in full by the Government of Serbia and the Parliament of Kosovo on 22 April. We join others in congratulating both parties for the strong political leadership and far-sighted vision they have displayed in reaching that historic milestone, which, among other important components, also allows both countries to make progress towards their European integration. I would also like to acknowledge the constructive and dynamic role played by High Representative Ashton over a period of four critical months to steer difficult negotiations to their successful outcome. It is necessary that both parties now implement the 15 points of the Agreement fully and in line with the agreed timelines.

A viable solution to the situation in Kosovo cannot be achieved without addressing the anxieties expressed by Serbs residing in northern Kosovo. Continuing political dialogue between Belgrade, Pristina and Serbs in northern Kosovo can ensure that the implementation process meets their concerns and interests. Local elections in municipalities in northern Kosovo later this year facilitated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe will be an important test of the degree to which Serbs residing in northern Kosovo feel a real sense of political inclusion. Ensuring that northern Kosovo's security structures become part of a coherent framework within Kosovo will also be a crucial step towards a long-term resolution of the situation.

Security, the rule of law and a strong human rights framework are essential components of any long-term sustainable solution to the situation in Kosovo. Australia is encouraged by the fact that the overall security situation on the ground remained relatively calm throughout the period covered by the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/254), but we regret the incidents which occurred in ethnically mixed areas in northern Kosovo. The attacks on offices of political parties and civil society groups are of particular concern and represent a threat to dialogue and mediation efforts. We commend the close cooperation between the Kosovo police, the European Union Rule of Law Mission and the Kosovo Force in responding to those challenges.

We welcome the steps taken by the Assembly of Kosovo to strengthen the rule of law and stem corruption. The work of the Kosovo police to fight organized crime and international narcotics flows is vital. That contributes to strengthening law and order not only in Kosovo but in the broader region.

Australia condemns acts of vandalism and the desecration of sites of cultural or religious significance. In that regard, we commend the establishment of

a specialized unit within the Kosovo police for the protection of cultural heritage and religious sites. We acknowledge the continuing efforts made to strengthen protection frameworks in Kosovo for religious, social and ethnic minorities. Australia continues to encourage the safe and viable return of internally displaced persons.

Much progress has been achieved over the past four months, and we welcome the efforts of the parties in working towards a stable and prosperous Kosovo. The international community needs to remain closely engaged to encourage and monitor the faithful implementation of the agreements reached at the political level and continue to support the ongoing political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and with local communities towards a better future for all people in Serbia and Kosovo.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): I thank Special Representative Farid Zarif for his important briefing. We thank Prime Minister Ivica Dačić and Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi for their compelling statements.

We welcome the peace and normalization agreement signed by Serbia and Kosovo on 19 April this year. The agreement is indeed a landmark. The two Prime Ministers have underlined that this is a historic moment for the two countries to improve relations and forge good-neighbourly ties. Leaders on both sides have shown courage and foresight to reach out, explore common ground and make the necessary compromises. They have succeeded against heavy odds. We congratulate them and the people of the two countries for their achievement. It should signal a new dawn in the region.

We appreciate High Representative Catherine Ashton for her skilful mediation which made the Agreement possible. We salute the European Union for its steadfast commitment to peace in the Balkans.

The signing of the agreement increases the prospects of reconciliation between Belgrade and Pristina and promotes peace in the region. It has a built-in potential to save future generations of Serbs and Kosovars from the scourge of strife. It is an opportunity for the region to transcend the narrative and the reality of ethnic cleansings.

The ratifications of the agreement by the Parliaments of Serbia and Kosovo demonstrate the collective desire of the people on both sides to resolve outstanding issues and move towards a common European future. We laud the undertaking that neither side will block each others' path towards integration with the European Union. The implementation of the agreement is as important as its signing. We urge both sides to conclude arrangements for implementing the agreement. They should not be deterred by those who seek to obstruct the path of peace.

It is important for the leaders to build support for the agreement among their communities and constituencies. The holding of elections in northern Kosovo in October 2013 and the integration of Serbs into the national mainstream are important benchmarks. Ethnic divisions and barriers must blur over time.

We are glad to learn that the situation in Kosovo is generally calm. That opportunity should be used to let peace and stability grow, but we should also heed the warnings by Special Representative Zarif and Prime Minister Dačić that stability in Kosovo is fragile.

In the implementation phase, therefore, close coordination between NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) will be extremely important. UNMIK, under the effective leadership of Special Representative Zarif, has an especially key role to play. We hope that the leadership of both countries will continue to find solutions to all outstanding problems and move their people away from the legacy of conflict to cooperation. Rapprochement should lead to new bonds between the two neighbours. The Agreement also gives fresh ground to the Council to bridge differences on Kosovo.

Pakistan recognized Kosovo's statehood last year. We sincerely hope that the people of Kosovo will grow and prosper in a stable environment as they rebuild their nation into a unitary and functional State. Pakistan wishes both States well. This is a historic moment. It must be captured by all, but primarily by Serbia and Kosovo.

Mr. Churkin (Russia) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-Genral, for presenting the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/254) on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome the participation in this meeting of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Dačić. We share his assessment.

We have listened carefully to Mr. Dačić. We expect that the results achieved during the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina conducted under European Union mediation will lead to a genuine improvement in the situation of the Serb population of Kosovo. We back Serbia's efforts in this very complex process. The demands for guarantees of a normal life in the province are fully justified. The dialogue addresses only a few aspects of the normalization of relations between Serbia and the province and has no bearing on the issue of the status of Kosovo, which remains open.

The only legal basis for a settlement of this issue continues to be resolution 1244 (1999). The Council remains the only body with the authority to take the relevant decisions. The international community and, first and foremost, the United Nations should not diminish the attention paid to events in Kosovo. Belgrade and Pristina's agreement has not removed the main problems in the province. Furthermore, the most difficult phase remains — the practical implementation of the agreement. We believe that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo must actively involve itself in the process. What must not be lost from sight are all the other aspects of the mandate granted to UNMIK under resolution 1244 (1999), which must be fully implemented. The United Nations presence has a significant potential for resolving issues that exist in such fields as the rule of law, the protection of minorities, the forging of intercommunal dialogue and, of course, the protection of Orthodox sites. For this reason, we are against a reduction in UNMIK's mandate; faced with so many problems, there is a need to expand the political component of the Mission.

The situation in the province, especially in the north, remains tense. That is demonstrated in the Secretary-General's report, with a growing number of cases of grenade explosions in areas of mixed populations in the north and the increase in ethnically motivated incidents in the west of Kosovo. Also of note is the letter circulated in the Security Council by the Head of Serb Department on Kosovo and Metohija regarding the low level of return of internally displaced persons in Kosovo. Regrettably, the numerous cases of Kosovo Serbs' property being put up for sale and their forced displacement outside the province continue to receive little attention. All of this bears witness to serious problems in the field of inter-ethnic tolerance. The size of major Serb enclaves is gradually decreasing. Smaller ones are essentially dying out.

The tensions relating to Orthodox churches and cemeteries can be seen in the fact that at the beginning of the year there was a wave of vandalism. There was also an unacceptable situation around the World Heritage site of the Visoki Dečani Serbian Orthodox Monastery. The disdain shown by the local authorities for laws passed to uphold the rights of national minorities and the preservation of Serbian cultural heritage is clear. Messages addressed to Pristina regarding the unacceptability of all this have shown themselves to be inadequate to restore genuine order in the province. Lengthy and persistent efforts will be needed by the international community. Of concern here are the European Union and NATO plans to reduce the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) and Kosovo Force missions active in the province on the basis of United Nations Security Council decisions.

We are concerned by the complete lack of information regarding the course of investigations by EULEX into the allegations by the Council of Europe's Special Rapporteur, Mr. Marty, regarding the illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo. Prosecutor Williamson's Special Investigative Task Force was set up in January 2011. Since the beginning of last year, it has been fully staffed and should work to produce real results.

The stabilization of Kosovo lies far ahead. Problems in the province, both current and long-term, can only be resolved by strictly political means. We expect that all international presences will unswervingly follow the provisions of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Kpayedo (Togo) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for presenting the quarterly report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/254) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I should also like to thank the representatives of Serbia and Kosovo for their important statements.

The agreement signed on 19 April between Kosovo and Serbia constitutes a decisive historic step on the path to the normalization of their relations. Fourteen years after the end of the conflict and five years after independence proclaimed by Kosovo, the parties, after months of tough negotiations, have finally initialled this agreement in order to put an end to the conflict in Kosovo and open up new prospects for both States. The agreement signed grants a large measure of autonomy

to the Serbian municipalities in North Kosovo and gives the Kosovo Government powers over all its territory, which constitutes a considerable step forward towards a consensus-based definition of the final status of Kosovo.

My country commends the political courage shown by the two parties in overcoming the resentment and the hostility of some of their people, who feared that the agreement might sacrifice their interests in the interest of a reasonable compromise. We urge parties to rapidly the implement committee called for by the "First agreement on principles governing the normalization of relations" so as to bring about its effective implementation. We believe that the first task of the Committee must be to propose judicial reforms in order to align legislation with the 15 points of the agreement.

Togo also urges both parties to pursue dialogue on the questions remaining in abeyance, particularly the issues regarding those persons who have disappeared or who are displaced, property ownership and the integration of the Kosovo Serbs into central institutions. Moreover, we welcome the progress achieved in other areas of dialogue, particularly the exchange of liaison officers, which should, as emphasized in the Secretary-General's report, foster communication between the two parties and the provisional agreement on customs and taxation questions.

There is a risk that the normalization under way in relations between Serbia and Kosovo might not achieve its purpose if the peoples who are principally concerned, particularly the Serbians in North Kosovo, are not involved in the new dynamic. The many demonstrations that the community organized before and after the signing of the agreement to voice its hostility to any connection with Kosovo and the demands put forward by the representatives demanding the convening in Serbia of a referendum on the Brussels agreement are a major source of concern. That is why Togo urges Serbia and Kosovo to take the necessary steps to explain the basis of the agreement and the comparative advantages that it affords to the various communities.

We encourage the Serbs in northern Kosovo who believe that their concerns have not been sufficiently taken into account to fully join in the process of normalization and to play a part in the local elections to be held in neighbouring municipalities. By doing that, they will be able to form the association of municipalities, which will be in charge of the administration of their municipal constituencies, pursuant to the 19 April agreement.

My country wishes to welcome the fact that the security situation has remained stable in Kosovo during the period under consideration, despite tension observed in the mixed zones in the north of Kosovo. We also are concerned by the incidents involving the use of firearms and explosives affecting both civilians and personnel of the Kosovo security forces. We urge the Kosovo police to continue their efforts to investigate the most recent events affecting minority communities, the defacing of property, acts of vandalism against religious sites, the desecration of graves and other acts of intolerance.

I would like to conclude by again expressing my country's congratulations to the European Union, in particular the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, whose decisive role made it possible for the 19 April agreement to be signed. We also wish to thank UNMIK, the Kosovo Force, the European Union Rule of Law Mission, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and all partner organizations standing with the Kosovo authorities in the stabilization of the territory and the construction of democratic institutions.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I convey my gratitude to Mr. Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for having presented the quarterly report that takes stock of developments in the situation of Kosovo. During the period under consideration, the Serb and Kosovo sides have shown political will in the spirit of compromise, as is clearly demonstrated by the new cycle of dialogue since the beginning of the year under the auspices of Baroness Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dačić and Mr. Hashim Thaçi have confirmed their commitment and resolve this morning before the Security Council, and we commend them.

The dialogue has promoted significant progress in the association/community project in Serb municipalities in Kosovo, ultimately leading to the approval by the parties on 19 April of the "first agreement on principles governing the normalization of relations". The agreement is historic in many ways. It marks a turning point in relations between Serbia

and Kosovo, and has finally opened a real prospect for their integration into the European Union. It is in the interest of both parties and the entire region that these agreements be fully implemented.

The parties have also made progress on issues as crucial as the levying of customs duties, taxes and value added tax in northern Kosovo, the issue of land records and the integrated management of border crossings. It is hoped that this process can lead to definitive agreements and extend to the crucial issue of the movement of people in order to help allay the fears and apprehensions of the people concerned. In this process, the parties have shown courage and resolve not to dwell on the past but to look to the future together. The European Union, for its part, has also demonstrated its ability to contribute through perseverance, persuasion and motivation to a breakthrough in relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

In terms of security, the situation has remained generally calm. However, the tension persists in the northern part of Kosovo because of incidents affecting minorities, such as theft of and damage to property, and the illegal occupation and burning of houses. The issue of the protection of heritage and religious sites continues to arise, and requires tangible action. The decision to set up a specialized Kosovo police unit for the protection of cultural heritage and religious sites is a measure which we welcome.

With regard to the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, we welcome the appointment of Mr. Bernd Borchardt to lead it. That structure must continue its monitoring, mentoring and advising activities in the field of rule of law and the promotion of cooperation with the parties to fight crime at the regional level.

We commend the parties for the progress made. We encourage them to consolidate the momentum by continuing to work with an open mind and conciliation to address the outstanding issues by intensifying their efforts and preparing a common future for present and future generations. We also congratulate the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force, which continue to play a key role in advancing the dialogue and negotiation between the parties to find a political solution that is comprehensive and inclusive, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Oyarzábal (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should first like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/254) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and to welcome the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Mr. Hashim Thaçi.

I underscore the role of the United Nations in Kosovo via UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights, as well as its cooperation with the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), maintaining a status-neutral position regarding the statute and under the auspices of the United Nations. We welcome the signing of the "First agreement on principles governing the normalization of relations" in the context of the high-level dialogue under European Union auspices. We trust that the agreement will give a high profile to the situation and that progress will be made on a political solution to the outstanding issues through compromise, trust and dialogue. Those in Serbia who favour the normalization of relations deserve special recognition. We urge the parties to pursue this agenda, pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999), and to implement the agreement strictly, overcoming past obstacles and acting in good faith and peacefully.

We must continue to focus on the security situation in northern Mitrovica. This will require coordinated action to ensure that the problems can be resolved in good faith and future tension avoided. UNMIK's important work makes it imperative to find practical solutions, prevent tension and ensure that the Administration continues to play its role in conflict prevention, mediation and facilitation.

We are concerned over the ongoing incidents and tensions, particularly the destruction of religious and cultural heritage, the prevention of which is an UNMIK priority. We draw special attention to the desecration of Orthodox Serbian cemeteries in Kosovo. Argentina condemns such acts and calls for the conclusion of investigations under way in order to punish the perpetrators of these acts of vandalism and religious intolerance, and to promote reconciliation between the communities.

We must continue to work to ensure the return and final integration of internally displaced persons and in particular facilitate their access to housing, basic services and jobs. We must also expedite the

documentation of their civil status and prevent incidents of insecurity. UNMIK technical assistance is essential in that regard. We support UNMIK as it supports the rule of law, particularly by cooperating with EULEX and the competent authorities in Serbia and Pristina.

In conclusion, I underscore the work of the Special Representative to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo, pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/254) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). My thanks also go to his Special Representative for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for introducing the report and for his sustained personal endeavours to promote the reconciliation of the Kosovo communities. We are also grateful for the words that we have heard from the high authorities with us today.

As others have done, we welcome the "First agreement of principles governing the normalization of relations" reached on 19 April within the framework of the dialogue facilitated by the European Union. This represents a historic step forward with the potential to achieve regional reconciliation, stability and prosperity. The most challenging part now is to ensure that the results of the dialogue are implemented and their positive impact on the ground.

We believe that UNMIK has a key role to play during this implementation phase. We support the assertions in the report that UNMIK, in supporting the positive achievements reached through dialogue, will henceforth focus its efforts on promoting reconciliation among the Kosovo communities.

The escalation of tensions and violence in northern Kosovo remains a cause for concern to my delegation. We note that the alarming trend of incidents involving explosive devices continues. Likewise, security incidents continue to affect returnee areas. We appreciate that the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), the Kosovo Force and local authorities have increased the visibility of their regular patrols and stepped up other preventative measures to the north of Mitrovica.

We also deplore the desecration of cemeteries of the Serbian Orthodox Church that took place during the reporting period. It is imperative that all of those incidents be fully investigated. In that regard, reform of the security and justice sectors must be undertaken, in particular with regard to the administrative and procedural problems that lead to delays in the processing of cases.

The situation facing minority communities in Kosovo still has not shown sufficient improvement, with a climate of tension and discrimination prevailing. We regret that the first quarter of 2013 saw the decrease in voluntary returns continue from the last quarter of 2012.

Turning to the work of the Special Investigative Task Force charged with looking into the reports of inhumane trafficking in persons and human organs, we note with interest the information included in the EULEX report annex and will follow developments in that regard closely. We support the operational cooperation objectives and therefore continue to support the reaching of an arrangement that would allow the United Nations to be involved in the investigation of these reports, all the more in the light of the report's affirmation that this is a complex investigation that will take time to complete and because it covers several jurisdictions and acts that would have been committed some 13 or 14 years ago.

This debate has confirmed that the United Nations continues to play an irreplaceable role as guarantor of stability and neutrality in Kosovo and the region and as a presence conducive to reconciliation among the different communities that coexist in that geographical space. A strong United Nations presence with sufficient resources remains necessary. We reaffirm the relevance of resolution 1244 (1999) as the applicable legal framework in Kosovo, as well as the importance of ensuring full respect for international law.

In conclusion, we draw some hope from the progress observed recently, which nevertheless does not yet imply any change in the position of my Government on the non-recognition of the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, Mr. Farid Zarif, for his briefing today. I am delighted to welcome to the Council His Excellency Mr. Hashim Thaçi, Prime Minister of Kosovo, and His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister of Serbia.

The normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia is integral to both countries' European Union (EU) accession paths. We welcome the EU-facilitated dialogue, the success of which must be attributed to the hard work of Cathy Ashton and the two Prime Ministers here today.

From the perspective of sitting in the Security Council, we are all too often able to observe how issues remain blocked because of the absence of vision and commitment on the part of political leaders. The progress that has been made in the EU-facilitated dialogue is a welcome reminder that the opposite can also be the case — that vision, commitment and persistence can yield tangible and effective results, and that flexibility from one side can generate flexibility on the other side. I offer my sincere congratulations to Prime Minister Thaçi and Prime Minister Dačić for the leadership and courage they have demonstrated in coming to an historic agreement that will aid the irrevocable progress of both countries towards the European Union.

The momentum of the past two months must be sustained. Implementation is crucial to unlocking progress for both Kosovo and Serbia. Belgrade must communicate the benefits of this agreement effectively to the local communities in northern Kosovo, and Pristina must demonstrate its support of the rights and culture of all its citizens and integrate Kosovo Serbs in the north.

The continued assistance of the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the implementation of dialogue agreements will be indispensable. The OSCE will play a crucial role in facilitating municipal elections in the north. KFOR will help with maintaining security and stability, and EULEX will help integrate institutions in the north under Kosovo's jurisdiction. The United Kingdom urges the authorities in Pristina and Belgrade to cooperate fully with EULEX and ensure freedom of movement for all of its personnel in the north.

I welcome Kosovo's commitment to holding free, fair and democratic elections. All citizens of Kosovo must have the opportunity to take part in the elections, and women must have an equitable role in competing for political office. The United Kingdom is keen to see the necessary reforms adopted without further delays.

The European Commission report of 22 April states that Kosovo has met the short-term conditionality set out at the December General Affairs Council for opening negotiations on a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. The United Kingdom fully supports a stabilization and association agreement with Kosovo.

Finally, I welcome the further progress made by Kosovo in securing wider international recognition. In recent weeks, the Governments of Guyana, Tanzania and Yemen have all decided to recognize Kosovo's independence. After only five years of independence, Kosovo is now recognized by over half of the States Members of the United Nations. Kosovo's independence is a reality, it is irreversible, and we welcome the steadily growing international recognition of that fact.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at noon.

United Nations S/PV.6980

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6980th meeting
Monday, 17 June 2013, 9.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Sir Mark Lyall Grant	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Oyarzábal
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Sharifov
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Mr. Asselborn
	Morocco	Mr. Bouchaara
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Kim Sook
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245)

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13-36540 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Canada, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Iraq, Myanmar, the Syrian Arab Republic and Thailand to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome the presence at the Council table of Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Ms. Yoka Brandt, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund; and Mr. Gregory Ramm, Associate Vice-President of Save the Children, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/245, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

I now give the floor to Ms. Zerrougui.

Ms. Zerrougui: I would like to begin by thanking the United Kingdom presidency of the Council and the Luxembourg chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for holding this important debate on children and armed conflict.

Council members have before them the twelfth annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245). The report reflects developments from January to December 2012 and relevant updates. Although the reporting period saw marked progress, especially in relation to dialogue with parties to conflict and action plans, disturbing new trends and concerns for children have also arisen.

As new conflicts emerged or deepened in the course of the past 18 months, children continued to pay a heavy toll — perhaps the heaviest. The evolving nature and tactics of armed conflict have created unprecedented threats for children. The absence of clear front lines and identifiable opponents, and the increasing use of terror tactics have made children more vulnerable. I would also like to highlight the fact that, as in previous years, non-State armed groups constitute the vast majority of listed parties. They account for 46 of the 55 perpetrators listed in the annexes. In addition, I would like to highlight that half of the parties listed are so-called persistent perpetrators, meaning that they have been on the list for five years or more. I welcome the efforts of the Working Group to devise innovative ways to address this issue, and I look forward to the outcome of these discussions.

In Mali, which has been included in the report for the first time, children were recruited by all armed groups active in the north. We also received information that boys and girls were associated with pro-Government militias in performing various tasks, including participation in combat. As the country is transitioning towards stabilization, it is crucial to ensure that no children are integrated into the regular armed forces or forgotten in the reintegration process, and that measures to prevent the recruitment of children be put in place. On the other hand, we continue to receive worrisome information on children being detained by the Malian security forces for alleged association with armed groups, as well as children hiding in their communities in fear of being arrested for association with armed groups. I call upon the Malian authorities to treat such children in line with international norms and standards.

In addition, accountability for all other violations committed in Mali, such as attacks on schools and hospitals, the killing and maiming of children and sexual violence, needs to be sought as a matter of priority. The international community has an important role to play to assist the Malian authorities in that crucial endeavour. I also wish to call upon all stakeholders to ensure that in the context of the ongoing peace talks in

Ouagadougou, the needs and best interests of children are adequately taken into account.

The conflict in the Central African Republic has also had a disproportionate impact on children. In a country where children have been deprived of a normal life for so many years, it is particularly alarming to see that two thirds of the children separated from armed groups in 2012 were re-recruited by the Séléka coalition at the beginning of 2013.

Many children were killed and injured during the clashes in Bangui in April 2013. Children continue to be affected by the ongoing insecurity and the lack of humanitarian access. More than 2 million children in the Central African Republic lack basic services, and hundreds of thousands lack access to education. Those children have suffered from repeated violations for too long, and it is now time to consider what further action, including targeted measures, should be taken against perpetrators to enhance protection and justice for children. I also call upon all relevant stakeholders to ensure that child protection remains central to ongoing discussions around the implementation of the Libreville Agreement in the Central African Republic.

It has been two years since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, yet we are no closer to saving the lives of children. As the conflict rages on, it affects me deeply that grave violations against children continue to be committed on such a massive scale.

Since my last briefing to the Council on children in Syria (see S/PV.6838), scores of them have been killed, injured, maimed, detained, tortured, recruited and forced to witness or to commit atrocities. If not for those children, then for whom will the Council act?

It is my intention to visit Syria and the region in the coming days to assess first-hand the consequences of the conflict on children. I will also reiterate my call on all parties to the conflict to take all possible measures to ensure that children are protected in the course of military operations, and to abide by international law. I look forward to briefing Council members on my findings upon my return.

As I mentioned earlier, new areas of concern for children have emerged and need to be addressed as a priority, including the military use of schools, the detention of children for alleged association with armed groups, and the impact of drones on children. I encourage Council members and all Governments concerned to carefully consider the recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General in that regard.

The report also highlights the progress that has been made in the past 18 months with regard to the protection of children in conflict. Though we have made progress with a number of non-State armed groups, this year has brought remarkable success with the Governments concerned. I very much doubt that this would have been possible without the support of the Council. Those Governments have accepted the framework that has been put in place by the resolutions of the Council and have engaged with the United Nations on measures to enhance child protection in conflict. One indicator is the growing number of inter-ministerial committees established by the Governments concerned to work with the United Nations on children affected by conflicts.

Another indicator is the development of legislation that criminalizes violations against children, as well as regulations and guidelines. In that regard, I welcome the efforts of the Governments of Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Philippines, which have made notable progress during the reporting period. In the same vein, I would like to commend those Governments that have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict since the most recent report of the Secretary-General, in April 2012 (S/2012/261). Those are most welcome steps towards universal ratification, as intended by the Zero Under 18 Campaign.

Additionally, there has been progress with regard to the engagement of regional organizations on the issue of children and armed conflict during the reporting period. NATO has adopted child-protection guidelines, including training materials prepared with the United Nations for constituent troops and partners.

Cooperation with the African Union is ongoing; my Office recently obtained a preliminary agreement to secure child-protection expertise within the Peace and Security Department. I also look forward to further strengthening our cooperation in mainstreaming child protection within the African Union and its regional peacekeeping activities, such as in Somalia or in the context of actions against the Lord's Resistance Army.

In 2004, the Council unanimously requested all parties listed in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General to enter into dialogue with the United Nations to prepare and implement action plans as a

unique tool to put an end to violations against children. In 2012 alone, four action plans to end the recruitment and use of children were signed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia and South Sudan. In addition, in line with resolution 1882 (2009), an action plan on the killing and maiming of children was also signed with the Government of Somalia, and provisions on sexual violence against children were included in the action plan signed with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to inform the Council that the Government of Chad has redoubled its efforts towards full compliance with the action plan signed in 2011.

It is worth noting that all of those action plans were signed with Governments to put an end to violations committed by their armed forces. That allows the United Nations to support those Governments not only in identifying, releasing and reintegrating children present in their ranks, but also in building their capacities, enacting more adequate legislation and preventing further violations.

Thanks to the Council's efforts, we have reached a seminal moment in the history of that mandate. I am happy to announce today that all armed forces listed in the annexes for recruitment and use of children have entered into an action plan process. Six have already signed an action plan, and the remaining two are in the final stages of negotiation.

One of the key objectives of that mandate — the end of the recruitment and use of children by armed forces — is finally within reach. In that regard, with the support of the Secretary-General, my Office will be launching a campaign aimed at ending the association of children with State armed forces in armed conflict by 2016. The campaign's objective will be to galvanize the efforts of concerned Governments, interested Member States and the United Nations system to turn the page on the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in armed conflict in the next three years. That is an unprecedented and ambitious initiative that therefore needs our full attention. UNICEF and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have already agreed to join the campaign. In the coming weeks, I will reach out to other United Nations partners. I count on Council members to support those efforts as well.

Before concluding, I would also like to stress that my Office has continued to receive enormous support from its partners since the creation of the mandate. I would like to commend the invaluable contribution of our trusted operational partners, including those here today. From the very beginning, the Council requested that child-protection expertise be included in peacekeeping missions in order to mainstream the issue of children and armed conflict. Since then, more than 100 child protection advisers have been deployed to carry out that agenda in peacekeeping contexts. In the light of the immense protection concerns affecting children in conflict, the deployment of child-protection advisers must not only continue but also grow. In that regard, I call on Council members to ensure that provisions for the timely and adequate deployment of child-protection advisers be included in all the relevant United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions.

The role of UNICEF cannot be overemphasized. Its efforts continue to make this agenda a reality in the field. Its work in ensuring that children formerly associated with armed forces and groups are reintegrated and rehabilitated is also critical. I will continue to advocate for ensuring that UNICEF and other partners have the support necessary to carry out those tasks.

I began my statement today by stressing that notable progress had been achieved. However, we must not be complacent. The time has come to reflect on what works. Dialogue with non-State parties, engagement with concerned Governments, a focus on capacity-building, and the Security Council's strong commitment have yielded significant results for children. I would like to conclude with an appeal. The child-protection agenda has made progress because eight years ago the Council took a firm stand with resolution 1612 (2005) and expressed its willingness to take all the necessary measures to ensure that children will be protected, in all contexts, from the consequences of war. Children in armed conflict need to know that the Council is listening and that all victims will receive the necessary protection. Perpetrators must also receive the strongest possible signal from the Council that their crimes will not go unpunished and that impunity will end. I call on the Council to continue to unite in that endeavour.

The President: I thank Ms. Zerrougui for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to brief the

Security Council on how peacekeeping operations have been implementing the Council's mandates on ensuring the protection of children in conflict situations. The report before us (S/2013/245) is a stark reminder that the situation of children in conflict remains dire and that our sustained engagement is vital at both the political and the operational levels. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is committed to ensuring that child protection, like all protection mandates, is fully addressed in our missions' overall political strategies and operational plans, and at all stages of our engagement. In order to achieve that goal, deploying dedicated and specialized child-protection advisers in peacekeeping operations is crucial.

First, those advisers ensure that child-protection concerns are reflected at all levels of a mission's strategic planning and operational activities. We are aware of how important it is to give purposeful attention to child protection at the earliest stages of operational planning. DPKO has therefore made the deployment of a child-protection adviser to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) a first-phase priority. The adviser will help the Mission to identify key child-protection issues, as well as the approaches and resources needed to address them. Where they are deployed, those advisers ensure that our missions implement the key priorities of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, one of the most important of which is monitoring and reporting serious violations. Our peacekeeping missions are fully engaged, through country-level task forces, in monitoring and reporting serious violations in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire.

A second priority is negotiating action plans aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children, and the killing and maiming of children. Under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, peacekeeping missions have been contributing both to the negotiation and to the implementation of such plans. Action plans recently signed in the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan have yielded concrete results. In 2012, screening for children by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo resulted in more than 1,300 children being released from those forces. Another 630 children, including 109 girls, were released by other armed forces and groups in the first quarter of this year.

In South Sudan, a revised action plan gave the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and UNICEF access to 71 barracks, from which hundreds of children were released. Protection is first and foremost a national responsibility. It is therefore particularly encouraging that child protection has been institutionalized in South Sudan through the creation of a child-protection unit in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the inclusion of child protection in the SPLA training curriculum. In addition, approximately 22,000 Sudan People's Liberation Army soldiers from throughout the ranks have been sensitized on child protection issues.

(*spoke in English*)

Lastly, child protection advisers advise all mission components on specific aspects of child protection relevant to their work. To achieve that, they deliver in-mission training on child protection issues for peacekeepers on the ground. Last year alone, 7,878 peacekeepers received training on child protection in our field operations. That training provides peacekeepers with key information on the situation of children in the specific mission context, and therefore prepares them to respond appropriately to any child-protection concerns that they encounter in the field.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is committed to ensuring that child protection receives attention throughout the peace consolidation process. The political engagement of peacekeeping operations has helped lay the groundwork for institution-building while highlighting child protection in national agendas. Important work is taking place in that regard in Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti continues to provide training to the Haitian National Police brigade for the protection of minors and supports legislative reform on important child-protection issues.

Our efforts in child protection constitute an excellent example of the kind of action in peacekeeping that requires a high degree of integrated action by civilian and uniformed components alike. Embedded in the heart of the mission, child protection advisers ensure that a mission's material and political assets and advantages — from access to authorities to other capabilities, including uniformed and civilian

expertise — are applied effectively to fulfil the mandate for child protection.

Given the magnitude of the challenges facing children affected by conflict, our achievements are no doubt modest. We are mindful that much more needs to be done. With that in mind, at the Headquarters level, we have invested in providing guidance and in developing training standards on child protection for peacekeepers.

The *United Nations Infantry Battalion Manual* issued by the Office of Military Affairs last year includes guidelines on child protection, notably a provision prohibiting the use of schools by peacekeepers for operational purposes. DPKO also worked with Member States to finalize predeployment training materials on child protection for all peacekeeping personnel. The materials will be piloted at courses in partnership with the Governments of Malaysia and Uruguay in September and October.

Awareness of the professional obligations of peacekeepers to protect children and their accountability to meet those obligations, in Mali and in other theatres where United Nations peacekeepers operate, is critical. As part of the transition from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, all AFISMA troops will be subject to predeployment training and vetting procedures, including in accordance with the requirements of the United Nations human rights screening policy, so as to ensure that they meet force requirements and have the necessary skills to implement the mandate. In addition, DPKO will deploy a mobile training team to Mali, which will deliver child-protection training for AFISMA personnel deployed there. Similar training is being undertaken for troops being deployed to the Force Intervention Brigade in MONUSCO.

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to UNICEF, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Save the Children Sweden and Member States that have partnered with us in the training initiative. Their support attests to the strong global partnership that has been built around child protection. For its part, I believe the Security Council can be credited with playing a critical role in creating and sustaining this partnership for the benefit of children in the most difficult circumstances.

The President: I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Brandt.

Ms. Brandt (UNICEF): UNICEF welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/245) and this opportunity to brief the Council. Allow me, first, to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui for her tireless efforts and those of her Office to protect children in armed conflict. I also thank the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for our fruitful collaboration on child protection. Our thanks also go to Luxembourg for chairing the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict since January. We welcome the presence of the representative of Save the Children, one of our main partners in child protection.

Sadly, in 2012, armed conflicts intensified in both reach and brutality. Civilians, especially children, were targeted, traumatized, maimed and killed. Childhoods were lost, families shattered and lives changed irreparably. Some conflicts experienced a lull, and we dared to hope for peace, only to watch them reignite. Other conflicts, such as in Syria, had an impact across borders and regions. With each outbreak of war, children suffer grave violations of their rights. Allow me to highlight two alarming trends.

The first trend relates to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Armed conflicts frequently occur in urban settings. When explosive weapons such as artillery, mortars, rockets, improvised explosive devices and aircraft bombs are used in those areas, they kill or injure large numbers of children. Those attacks not only have a long-term emotional and psychological impact on children, but also destroy vital social infrastructure such as roads and power supplies. They deprive children of access to essential basic services, such as schools and hospitals, and, in the absence of immediate medical care, injuries can turn into life-long disabilities. We therefore urge all parties to conflict to adopt different tactics and rules of engagement. We urge that they neither position their troops among civilians nor target each other in the middle of villages, towns and cities. We urge that they adopt rules to guide how and where explosive weapons can be used.

The second trend has to do with the use of schools in military operations. UNICEF is deeply concerned about that. It poses grave risks to children and educators. It robs children of the opportunity to learn and it violates their right to education. We are encouraged by the

leadership of countries such as the Philippines, which have restricted the use of schools by their armed forces and continue to strengthen their laws and guidelines. We hope that others will follow those examples. We must preserve schools as places of learning and safe havens for children.

Those two trends highlight the critical role of the children-and-armed conflict agenda. Encouraging parties to conflict to comply with international child-rights norms and standards is crucial if we are to safeguard the lives and futures of children. That must also remain our focus as we address the issue of persistent perpetrators on the list. We do that through action plans and country task forces. Action plans are critical to commit parties to conflict to halting the violation of children's rights. My call today is that those plans be fully implemented, as Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui just pointed out, because commitments do not save children's lives, concrete actions do. Such actions include releasing children from armed groups, raising awareness in communities to report violations and tracing children and reuniting them with their families.

This year, country task forces developed ways to accelerate the implementation of action plans by setting benchmarks, holding regular dialogues between the United Nations and parties and addressing bottlenecks to progress. But there is still much work to be done. As we monitor grave violations against children in armed conflict, we must especially focus on prevention. That means making sure that children are, first and foremost, safe in their families and secure in their communities.

We have failed many children, but the story of one 15-year-old boy, a former child soldier in the Central African Republic, should inspire us. Upon learning that his family had held a funeral for him after he was abducted, he was determined to tell his parents he was alive. He joined a centre for child soldiers and prepared to return to his village and reclaim his life. "Better late than never," he said. It would be better still if he had not been robbed of his childhood in the first place. Let his courage and example inspire us to reach more children like him. With the Council's help, we can all work towards that noble goal.

The President: I thank Ms. Brandt for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ramm.

Mr. Ramm: I am honoured to speak alongside the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and colleagues from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and UNICEF. We are committed to working together to ensure greater protection for children and greater accountability for the grave violations perpetrated against them.

Save the Children works in dozens of countries affected by conflict, delivering life-saving assistance to millions of children and families in need. We see at first-hand the devastating impact and suffering of children in conflicts around the world. There are three areas that I would like to highlight today: sexual violence against children, the use of explosive weapons and attacks on schools. I also want to emphasize the importance of prevention as well as response.

Sexual violence affects millions of children in conflicts. Our research and programming indicate that the majority of the survivors of sexual violence in conflict-affected countries are children — mostly girls but also boys. Sexual violence has significant physical, psychological and social impacts on children, but their needs for specific protection and child-sensitive responses are frequently neglected. In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, our assessments in and around Goma have revealed significant numbers of children affected by sexual violence. Save the Children is working in the camps to identify victims so as to assist them with appropriate health and psychosocial services. More action is needed to end sexual violence, including legal reforms and adequate funding to support child-sensitive and appropriate responses. We call on Member States to place children at the centre of international action on sexual violence in conflict; to ensure the necessary resources, expertise and political backing for prevention and response; and to hold perpetrators accountable.

The use of explosive weapons in conflict has devastating consequences for children, who are killed and maimed in greater numbers as a result of such weapons. They are left with deep physical and psychological scars and are denied access to education and health care, owing to damaged infrastructure, and they end up displaced from their homes as families flee insecurity. In Syria, we witness those effects at first-hand. As one little girl told us:

> "At the beginning ... there was no shelling at my school, but after some time the shelling started. I stopped going to school ... It was not safe. I feel sad that my school was burned."

Save the Children calls on States to refrain from the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects by revising and strengthening military policies and procedures; supporting the collection and sharing of data with the United Nations on the impact of such weapons on children; and holding to account those who use such weapons.

Save the Children is responding to the Syrian crisis and, to date, we have assisted over 300,000 children and their families inside Syria and in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. We are providing impartial, life-saving support, including food, clothing and essential items to improve health and hygiene. We run child-friendly spaces offering psychosocial support, education activities and a safe place to play. As the Secretary-General himself says, the toll of the conflict on children is "unacceptable and unbearable" (*S/2013/245, para. 208*). Security Council members must unite to work towards a negotiated settlement in Syria and, in the meantime, ensure that humanitarian assistance is funded and reaches populations most in need.

Schools are increasingly targets of attack, with children frequently killed or injured. Greater action is needed in order to protect children, teachers and schools from targeted violence and to stop the use of schools for military purposes. In 2011, the Security Council adopted resolution 1998 (2011) to strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanism so as to include attacks on schools and hospitals as a trigger for action. Save the Children calls on the Council to ensure that attacks on schools are acted upon in accordance with that resolution, so that victims receive support and future attacks are prevented. Schools must be respected by all parties as conflict-free zones, and measures must be taken to restrict their military use.

Humanitarian agencies like ours do all we can to assist victims of conflict, but we need the help of Governments and the Security Council to prevent children from becoming victims in the first place. In Mali, Save the Children is reuniting children separated from their families during the recent conflict, providing psychosocial support and strengthening community-based responses. Since 1998, we have trained thousands of military personnel, police force members and peacekeepers throughout Africa in child rights and protection. Currently, we are cooperating with UNICEF and DPKO to develop mandatory training on the protection of children for all United Nations peacekeepers worldwide, as noted earlier. When authorizing peacekeeping missions, the Security Council must require personnel to receive pre-deployment training in child protection, as in Mali, including the capacity to prevent and monitor grave violations against children.

Parties to conflict must abide by their international legal obligations and take measures to ensure that children are protected at all times. Member States must support efforts to ensure not only that grave violations are documented but also that perpetrators are held to account.

We applaud the Security Council's efforts to ensure the protection of children from the grave violations committed against them. We encourage the Security Council to ensure that the children and armed conflict agenda remains strong with future open debates. Children throughout the world need us to act to spare them from suffering before more violations occur.

The President: I thank Mr. Ramm for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to warmly thank the President for organizing this debate on children and armed conflict. As you know, my country attaches great importance to the issue and has done so for many years.

I would like to pay tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms Leila Zerrougui, and thank her for the vital work she has accomplished. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr Hervé Ladsous, for his briefing and the indispensable contributions made by peacekeeping missions' personnel to protect children affected by armed conflict. I would also like to thank UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Ms. Yoka Brandt for the exemplary work done by her teams in the field. I would finally like to welcome the fact that civil society has had the opportunity to address the Council. Civil society has indeed an important role to play, both in terms of raising our awareness and in terms of monitoring commitments.

Luxembourg fully endorses the statement to be made by the representative of the European Union.

We have gathered in the Chamber today to discuss the question of children and armed conflict, as described by the latest annual report by the Secretary-General (S/2013/245) and against the backdrop of the conflicts in Syria, in the Central African Republic, in Mali and in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, to name but a few.

Allow me to consider for a moment the situation in Syria.

In Syria, close to three million children have been affected by the conflict so far. Thousands have lost their lives, and many others have been subjected to atrocious torture or sexual violence. Even those who have escaped the worst are unable to live a normal life. More than half of the country's hospitals have been damaged or rendered inoperable. Nearly 2,500 schools have been partially or completely destroyed. While the numbers may appear abstract, how much suffering is obscured by them and how many shattered lives hide behind them?

The situation cannot continue. We must do everything to end those massacres, of which children are most cruelly and unjustly the first victims. We must put an end the conflict in Syria. We need to find a political solution, a solution that brings a political transition to Syria and that responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We need to find it quickly. The Geneva II conference on Syria appears more and more like a last-chance opportunity. The international community, and chiefly this Council, must finally shoulder its responsibilities in the area.

A dozen years ago, the Security Council had decided to resolutely tackle the issue of children and armed conflict and to give it the full attention it merits. Since then, nine resolutions and 11 presidential statements have been adopted on the topic and considerable progress has been made. In particular, I welcome the adoption, later today, of a new draft presidential statement on the occasion of today's debate, in which the Council unanimously and unambiguously reiterates its commitment — even if that took some time — to end violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict. However, for all its importance, that normative framework is not enough. It must also implemented. For the Security Council that means constantly monitoring its decisions and ensuring that they are implemented.

An increasing number of Member States concerned are making commitments to end violations against children affected by armed conflict. Tens of thousands of children have already been freed thanks to the implementation of action plans by Governments in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and other relevant United Nations entities. I welcome the fact that, to date, almost all concerned Member States have signed action plans. I commend in particular the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict's campaign, supported by the Secretary-General, which is trying to end to the recruitment of children into regular armed forces and their use in armed conflict by 2016.

However, there again commitments are insufficient. They must be fully implemented. Since the previous annual report (S/2012/261) two countries were removed from the so-called "list of shame" thanks to the effective implementation of their commitments. I am speaking of Nepal and Sri Lanka. Those examples demonstrate that the matter of children in armed conflict requires an approach that combines incentives as well as coercive measures. Action plans create a space for cooperation that gives Governments an opportunity to work with the United Nations to put an end to grave violations perpetrated against children. In that context, technical and financial support for the implementation of action plans must not be neglected.

However, we must not limit our action to governance alone. The great majority of persistent perpetrators are non-State armed groups. It is necessary to continue engaging with them and to bring pressure to bear upon them so that they stop their abuses against children. The issue of children in armed conflict cannot be solved definitively unless all parties to a conflict respect their obligations.

In situations where dialogue with the parties to the conflict fails, other measures become necessary. As it has been stressed by the Special Representative of the Secretary -General, most of the parties listed in the annexes have been present there for many years. The international community must act to put an end to such practices. In that regard, I welcome the ongoing discussions in the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on the best means

to increase pressure on persistent perpetrators. In that regard, the Security Council must lead the way and send a strong signal, when necessary, by applying sanctions against persistent violators of children's rights.

Justice cannot be served so long as the perpetrators of the worst atrocities against children are not held accountable for their actions. That is the very reason that the International Criminal Court's conviction of Thomas Lubanga for the recruitment of children is such a landmark case. It is a strong powerful message to all of those who commit crimes against children. They shall no longer go unpunished.

The growing importance that regional and subregional organizations and arrangements, notably the African Union and European Union, are attaching to the problem of children in armed conflict is also a reason for satisfaction and one of hope. It is evident that commitment at the regional level can be beneficial only if it supports complements the efforts of the United Nations. The same applies to NATO efforts undertaken to integrate the normative framework developed by the Security Council on children in armed conflict into its policies and operations. NATO and the United Nations joint development of a special training module is particularly welcome in that regard.

In 2003, Secretary-General Kofi Annan advocated for an era of implementing the Security Council's resolutions on children in armed conflict. Ten years on, significant progress has been made. However, much remains to be done to ensure that children may one day be spared from the horrors of war.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for hosting today's debate on children on armed conflict. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Yoka Brandt and Save the Children Associate Vice-President Gregory Ramm for their remarks. We are also grateful to Ambassador Lucas for her leadership as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Chilren and Armed Conflict. We also deeply appreciate the devoted work of Special Representative Leila Zerrougui and her team in advancing this agenda. I thank her for her briefing this morning as well.

The United States remains determined to combat horrific acts committed against children in conflict-torn countries. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/245) attests, there is no starker example of where children desperately need the international community's help than Syria. As we speak, Syrian children are being tortured and murdered, used as human shields and conscripted as fighters. Syria is unfortunately not the only place where abuses are surging.

In the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo armed groups, including the Mouvement du 23 Mars, have engaged in unlawful child recruitment, as well as killing and maiming of children. We welcome the commitment of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to address those horrors by signing an action plan last October. We call for the expeditious implementation of that plan.

We have also seen welcome progress in Burma, where the Government has shown a degree of commitment to the action plan signed in June 2012 by releasing 97 under-age military recruits in 2012. However, we remain concerned that there was an increase in complaints about unlawful child recruitment in 2012 that occurred in 2011. We urge Burma, in accordance with its commitments, to allow United Nations access to military units to conduct verification visits. Moreover, non-State armed ethnic groups in Burma continue to use child soldiers. More progress is needed on this front.

The Security Council requires more effective ways to deal with the growing number of persistent perpetrators, especially among armed groups. In that regard, we appreciate the Working Group's focus on this issue and its effort to develop appropriate tools. We also commend the Secretary-General's proposals, which deserve the Council's serious consideration.

The question of persistent perpetrators, however, raises a larger issue about the United Nations children-and-armed-conflict process itself. We can be proud of its accomplishments and must strive to make it as effective as it can be. But it is only one tool among the many that we should be using to protect children. Rather than attempting to make the action plan process a one-size fits all mechanism, we should promote children-and-armed-conflict action plans in tandem with other tools, to comprehensively address the various contexts in which children are subjected to abuse. A wider range of efforts is needed, from holding perpetrators accountable and preventing them from committing abuses to resolving situations of conflict that enable such heinous crimes. For example, the conviction

of Thomas Lubanga for unlawful child soldiering by the International Criminal Court sends an important message that such crimes will not be tolerated.

Furthermore, several African countries, with the support of the African Union, the United Nations, the United States and others, are cooperating to end once and for all the threat posed by the Lord Resistance's Army (LRA), one of the world's worst perpetrators of crimes against children. As noted in the Council's discussion on 29 May (see S/PV.6971), that effort has resulted in a substantial decrease in LRA attacks, the removal of two top LRA commanders from the battlefield and the defection of scores of LRA fighters.

Finally, peacemaking efforts work to safeguard endangered children by ending the armed conflict itself. Connecting those efforts into a comprehensive approach will strengthen the ultimate goals of the children-and-armed-conflict action plan process and concretely advance the issue of the plight of children caught in harm's way.

Mr. Sharifov (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to thank the United Kingdom for convening today's debate on children and armed conflict and to welcome Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, to today's meeting. I also wish to thank all briefers for their extensive statements.

In recent years, the issue of children and armed conflict has been placed firmly on the international agenda, and a solid framework of international legal norms and standards has been developed. Important steps have been taken through the application and enforcement of those norms and standards in order to achieve accountability for grave violations committed against children. The engagement of the Security Council has increased the general awareness of the issue of the protection of children in armed conflict, significantly advanced the scope of actions and created opportunities to improve common approaches in that regard. We welcome the increasing attention of the Security Council to this topic and commend the efforts of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict under the able leadership of Ambassador Sylvie Lucas of Luxembourg.

Azerbaijan's strong position with regard to the protection of civilians, including children, in situations of armed conflict is based on my country's keen interest in contributing to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to the achievement of sustainable peace and development. Our interest also stems from our practical experience in addressing the devastating consequences of serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed during the war unleashed against my country. Azerbaijan continues to suffer from one of the highest number of refugees and displaced persons in the world, many of whom are children.

Azerbaijan welcomes the progress made in preventing and responding to violations and abuses committed against children, especially with regard to the thousands of children who have been demobilized, rehabilitated and reintegrated. We also note the increasing number of action plans that have been adopted or are under negotiation. At the same time, we acknowledge that the provision of sufficient and sustained resources is crucial to the timely implementation of such agreed plans.

At the same time, we remain deeply concerned by the high number of violations and abuses against children in the various situations of armed conflict throughout the world, where children are being used for military purposes and continue be the indiscriminate target of military targets. Furthermore, the military use of schools, including as shields, as barracks or for weapons storage, in the course of armed conflict deprives children of their right to education and potentially puts them at risk of attack. Other challenging issues that call for urgent attention include children being taken hostage, being reported missing in connection with armed conflict, or being used as suicide bombers in acts of terrorism.

Azerbaijan remains deeply concerned by the negative impact of armed conflict on children and strongly condemns all violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed against children. We have always been consistent in demanding the strict observance by the parties to armed conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law in all circumstances.

Governments bear the primary responsibility to ensure protection of and provision of relief to all children affected by armed conflict, and the United Nations must continue to support and supplement such national efforts. The monitoring and reporting mechanism of the United Nations envisages the involvement of and close cooperation with the countries concerned. It is

equally important that access by the United Nations for the purpose of monitoring and reporting on violations and abuses committed against children is carried out with strict respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State concerned.

The vulnerability of children in wartime brings an element of urgency, dedication and strong commitment to worldwide protection efforts, which must be free of selectivity. Azerbaijan highlights the role of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflicts in that regard. The fulfilment of the Special Representative's mandate with respect to all situations of armed conflict, including those of a protracted nature, is crucial in that regard.

Important steps have been taken in a number of situations of armed conflict to achieve accountability for grave violations against children, including the development of international jurisprudence. However, serious challenges remain.

In conclusion, I would like once again to reiterate that more resolute and consistent efforts are required to end impunity and to find a long-term and sustained solution to eliminate and prevent illegal practices affecting the rights of children.

Mr. Oyarzábal (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank the United Kingdom for its initiative in convening this debate. I also commend Luxembourg for its work in chairing the Working Group and guiding the negotiations that produced today's draft presidential statement on this topic. We will be able to adopt a draft presidential statement today thanks to the flexibility shown by the delegations, which Argentina values very highly in the light of the importance of this topic and the text to be adopted.

We also thank in particular the briefings by Special Representative Leila Zerrougui, Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous, the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Johanna Brandt, and the Associate Vice-President of Save the Children, Gregory Ramm. We reiterate Argentina's firm support for the work carried out by the Security Council with a view to ending grave violations of the rights of children in the context of armed conflict. Such acts are unacceptable acts that harm the international community as a whole and which we therefore condemn in the strongest possible terms.

The delegation of Argentina underscores the important role played by the Special Rapporteur of the Secretary-General in cooperation with UNICEF and other agencies of the system in implementing the scheme created by the Council in its successive resolutions, which has recently achieved positive results. However, as can be seen from the report before us today (S/2013/245), a great deal remains to be done.

The Council's condemnation should not be limited to merely taking note of the public naming by the Secretary-General in his report of those parties that commit violations against children; rather, it should also translate into specific measures that reflect a genuine and comprehensive understanding of the issues at all levels of the Council's agenda. Indeed, child protection should be taken into account in the peacekeeping operation plans presented to the Security Council, including support for the inclusion of child protection experts in the operations mandated by the Council and capacity-building and knowledge sharing in the area of human rights.

We welcome the discussions held by the Working Group on ways to step up pressure on parties that consistently commit violations despite the repeated calls by the Council to those parties to cease committing such violations. In that regard, we reiterate the need for greater coordination between the system for the protection of children in armed conflict and the various sanctions regimes, in order to make it possible to impose sanctions aimed at the perpetrators of the most flagrant violations against children in conflict situations.

Argentina believes that the fight against impunity is fundamental in the broader context of State responsibility for the protection of civilians. It is States that bear the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute persons responsible for war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and other serious infringements of international law. When States cannot or will not exercise that primary jurisdiction which belongs to them, the international system provides alternative mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC). Thus the national and international mechanisms for monitoring the application of international law must be strengthened in order to ensure accountability. In that regard, we wish to echo the position taken recently by the International Criminal Court that any financial difficulties that a country may be facing cannot justify the failure to prosecute such crimes. Likewise, in terms of measures against persistent perpetrators, the

ICC has a fundamentally important role to play. When adopting resolution 1612 (2005) in 2005, Argentina, as a member of the Council at the time, emphasized the important need for the Working Group created by that resolution to work with the International Criminal Court and share information as available. Reality has confirmed that need, given that a significant number of the countries mentioned in the report have ratified the Rome Statute. In some cases, situations have been referred to the Court either by the affected State itself or by the Council.

In its first ruling — the case of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo — the Court demonstrated its crucial role in the investigation, trial and sentencing of criminals and its ability to deter and prevent future serious violations of international law and its ability to work towards justice, truth and reconciliation.

We also welcome the transfer of Bosco Ntaganda to the Court in March. That auspicious step forward illustrates the importance of the growing cooperation among States and the Court.

Argentina has always stressed the need to address the deep-rooted causes of violence and to provide and strengthen development assistance in order to assist States in rebuilding. It is essential that rehabilitation efforts for victims provide genuine programmes aimed at reintegration, while avoiding the possibility of fresh recruitment, which, unfortunately, continues to occur frequently.

We are concerned about the growing use of schools for military purposes and the increase in attacks on schools, teachers and schoolchildren. We therefore believe that the international community should devote particular attention to that problem, as the right to education of thousands of children worldwide is being dramatically affected.

The report also mentions the effects on children of attacks by unmanned aerial vehicles used in military operations and the growing number of children in detention, matters that are also of concern. We therefore reiterate that anti-terrorism efforts must be carried out in full respect for international law.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): The Council is briefed almost daily about the horrific impacts of conflict around the world. We know that children are among those who suffer the most. They are recruited, attacked, tortured and abducted and are also victims of sexual violence. Their schools and hospitals are attacked, and they are often denied life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The Council can never do enough to protect those children. We strongly support the mandate and work of Special Representative Zerrougui. We thank her, Under-Secretary-General Ladsous, Ms. Brandt and Mr. Ramm for their briefings today, and even more so for their efforts. We also thank Luxembourg for its dedication to child protection and for unifying the Security Council through a draft presidential statement aimed at moving the agenda forward.

The past decade has seen substantial progress on the child protection agenda. We now have important tools at our disposal, including an expanded set of triggers for listing perpetrators of grave violations and for the more regular inclusion of child-protection advisers in peacekeeping missions, the signing of action plans by the Governments of Myanmar, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the past year are also welcome developments. Yet, as the Council knows, grave violations against conflict-affected children continue and do so on a daily basis.

The situation in Syria is dire. Possibly half of the almost 7 million Syrian internally displaced persons are children; approximately half of the 1.6 million refugees are children. Between 3 and 4 million Syrian children are in need. Thousands of children have been killed, gravely injured and even tortured. The damage to Syria's infrastructure, including schools — with one in five either destroyed, damaged or converted into a shelter — is depriving Syrian children of their basic needs.

There are far too many other accounts of violations, which we have been briefed on. In Mali and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo it is crucial that peacekeeping missions ensure the effective protection of children. We have also heard terrible reports of the large number of children recruited in the Central African Republic — a situation on which the Council must be engaged.

More broadly, my country shares the concerns of the Secretary-General that the evolving character and tactics of armed conflict are creating unprecedented threats to children. In particular, we share the serious concerns about the use of schools for military purposes.

Obviously, more must be done. I would like to focus very briefly on three areas where greater efforts could be made.

First, action plans to halt child recruitment have had a real impact on ending violations against children in a number of countries. Given that many non-State armed groups violate children's rights during conflict, we encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to continue to focus on engaging with them, as well as with Governments, in a concerted effort to conclude action plans.

Secondly, some existing sanctions regimes have child rights violations as listing criteria. The Council should make better use of its sanctions regimes to designate individuals or entities not previously considered for listing, but whose child-rights violations would qualify them for it.

Thirdly, it is crucial that we end impunity for those most responsible for serious crimes against children. We call on States to criminalize serious violations of international law committed against children. In cases where States are unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute crimes, the Council should consider whether referral to the International Criminal Court is warranted.

In conclusion, we must ensure that children, who are those most vulnerable during armed conflict and those least able to withstand its ravages, are shielded from its impacts. Protecting children should compel both Council unity and action. We should ask ourselves, following Special Representative Zerrougui's lead this morning, "If not for these children, then for whom will this Council act?".

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the United Kingdom for conducting today's debate. We are grateful to the briefers for their attention to the protection of children in armed conflict and for the useful information they have provided in that context to the Council.

Children continue to suffer from the horrors of war. Russia condemns all serious violations against children, by whomsoever they may be committed, and advocates the prosecution of all such perpetrators. Crimes committed against children must be punished. We too believe it necessary to deal with all six categories of grave violations against children in armed conflict, namely, the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children, the killing and maiming of children, abductions, attacks against schools and hospitals and the blocking of humanitarian access to children. A particular concern is the killing and wounding of children during planned attacks and as a result of the indiscriminate or disproportionate use of force or the use of unmanned aerial vehicles. It is unfortunate that such cases are taking place with lamentable regularity. We call for the thorough investigation of such incidents and the prosecution of perpetrators.

Resolution 1612 (2005) and the Council's follow-up documents on the matter provide a foundation for ensuring the protection of children in armed conflict and post-conflict rebuilding situations. That pertains to the functioning of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict and the activities of the relevant Working Group of the Security Council. The Russian Federation is of the view that those mechanisms must focus chiefly on the most pressing major armed conflict situations on the Council's agenda. With respect to other situations, the Working Group may consider those only upon the agreement of the State in question.

There is no doubt that children need support and protection in situations other than those involving armed conflict; the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council also cover matters dealing with children. In order to strengthen the effectiveness of work in that important area, existing work distribution arrangements among the appropriate United Nations entities must be strictly followed, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and other international law instruments.

The Russian delegation has carefully studied the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/245), which was introduced by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. First and foremost, we would note that the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General does not cover the protection of children as a whole; rather, it covers the situation of children in armed conflict. We do not see any justification for a broad interpretation of the concept of armed conflict, as a result of which, for several years now, the Security Council has been presented with information on situations that are not part of its agenda and cannot be qualified as involving armed conflict. Moreover, the principle guiding the selection of information for the report remains unclear. Balanced evaluations based on well-deserved trust and

reliable information provide a guarantee that, through respectful dialogue with the States concerned, the recommendations will be implemented.

The priority set forth during our debate today — namely, the need to bring pressure to bear on the so-called persistent perpetrators — is undoubtedly important. However, taken out of the relevant context, tackling the problem is impossible. We suggest first and foremost that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General draw up clear procedures and criteria for the listing and de-listing of parties to a conflict in the annex to the annual report of the Secretary-General. Unfortunately, despite the multiple appeals over several years made by a number of members of the Security Council and the direct instructions given by the Council in resolutions 1998 (2011) and 2068 (2012), no progress has been made in resolving the problem.

We believe that, before deciding what should be done with parties to a conflict characterized as "persistent perpetrators", we must understand why they are being classified as such. The only criterion used to date is continuous reference to a given party to a conflict in the report of the Secretary-General over a five-year period. In our view, that criterion is superficial.

With regard to the criteria for de-listing parties to a conflict in the report, in our view the mere existence of an action plan for halting some sort of a crime drawn up by a party to the conflict with the United Nations is not a guarantee that the situation of children will improve. There is no denying the fact that a number of States in whose territories parties to a conflict listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report are carrying out activities are doing things to change the situation. The lack of clear criteria not only does not help the Governments of those countries but also gives rise to a sort of lack of trust regarding the objectivity and effective of the approach as a whole.

With regard to efforts to bring pressure to bear on perpetrators, the means could vary depending on the situation. In our view, sanctions are not a panacea. Of primary importance is constructive cooperation between the United Nations and the States where armed groups are acting. Undoubtedly, the leading role for protecting children must be played by national Governments, and the primary task of the United Nations is to complement those efforts upon the request of such States.

Effective cooperation with the Governments of countries engulfed in conflict or in a post-conflict reconstruction phase can be established only in an atmosphere of trust and dialogue, which, in the final analysis, will foster an improvement of the situation of children on the ground.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that the Russian Federation attaches the highest importance to the matter of the protection of children in armed conflict and to international efforts to resolve that important issue.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the President for having organized today's debate. I would also like to thank the briefers and other speakers. I congratulate the delegation of Luxembourg on the way it has conducted the chairmanship of the Working Group, and I reiterate France's support.

The United Nations approach to protecting children in armed conflict has made it possible to demobilize tens of thousands of children. Action plans are the cornerstone of that approach. Thanks to them, in 2012 two States were taken off the list of shame.

Taken together, the approximately 20 action plans that have been signed are a sign of progress made in protecting children in armed conflict. The implementation of those actions plans must be carried out as soon as possible for them to be fully effective. In that way, our credibility can be ensured. In order to do that, the international community and the United Nations must deploy all the material and human resources they have at their disposal.

Action plans are based on cooperation between States, and progress has been made in that area. In that connection, we are encouraged by the cooperation and political will shown by Chad to finalize its action plan.

The United Nations approach on the ground has been strengthened over the years. Let us consider, for example, the child protection sections in peacekeeping operations, which play a crucial role and whose deployment must continue. Nevertheless, countless violations continue to occur, and each conflict shows us that reality. Children are the first victims of conflict.

That is the case in Syria, where the regime and the militias have been responsible for the worst atrocities against children. Children are tortured and subjected to sexual violence in detention. They are killed without pity by elite snipers, who target them by design in

order to terrorize the people. Schools are being bombed incessantly, to such an extent that only 6 per cent of children have access to education in the region of Aleppo. Since the beginning of the crisis, more than 6,500 children have been killed in Syria, and that figure is probably lower than the actual figures.

Violations against children in Syria must be condemned, whatever their source. The Syrian opposition says that it is prepared to open a dialogue with the United Nations on the issue. We would therefore encourage the Special Representative to launch, as soon as possible, discussions for the signing of an action plan with them.

In Mali, armed groups in the north have mutilated and tortured children. They have used children as human shields and recruited them by force. The situation has improved since the beginning of the year but remains fragile. The deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali will help to stabilize the country and provide better protection for children.

In the Central African Republic, Séléka armed groups have been engaged in looting, rape and summary executions, and they have not hesitated to attack UNICEF disarmament, demobilization and reintegration centres in order to re-recruit children who had recently been demobilized, reversing the progress achieved last year. The chaos caused by armed groups has led to the closing of half of the schools in the country, thus increasing the vulnerability of children left to their own devices.

In the Kivus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Mouvement du 23 mars rebels know where to find children to fuel their war against Congolese sovereignty. We count on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its strengthened mandate to protect children and make it possible for them to return to their families.

While new crises provide new challenges for the protection of children in armed conflict, the long list of persistent perpetrators continues to affect the credibility of our action. It calls upon us to pursue our efforts. In addition to the States that have already signed an action plan, which should be our priority, we should also improve our response to the armed groups that want to engage in dialogue with the United Nations but for whom access is impossible. The States concerned have the responsibility to do everything in their power to ensure and facilitate access for those groups, because we are convinced that, in order to ensure the protection of children trapped in conflict, political considerations should give way to humanitarian imperatives.

France is also in favour of authorizing the Working Group to set itself up as an ad hoc sanctions panel to deal with armed extremists who refuse all dialogue with the international community and who continue their violations with full impunity.

Indeed, the fight against impunity should be central to our action. Recently, the transfer to the International Criminal Court of Bosco Ntaganda sent out a strong signal on the criminal consequences of the recruitment of child soldiers, which is considered to be a war crime. That is why we are in favour of strengthening dialogue with the International Criminal Court, which could, in the first phase, include an invitation to Ms. Fatou Bensouda, the Prosecutor of the Court, to brief the Council on the issue.

France is also involved on the ground in improving the protection and sustainable reinsertion of children caught in armed conflict. Since 2008, we have led a programme in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa that has made it possible to reach 13,000 children, 2,000 of them child soldiers.

We continue to call on all States to endorse the Paris Principles and Paris Commitments, which complement the action of the Security Council and provide a solid framework for the action of the international community to protect children in armed conflict. We are going modify the format of the annual meetings, which will take on a regional and technical slant as we approach the tenth anniversary of the Paris Principles in 2017. With our partners from the Secretariat and from UNICEF, I renew our call to join, without any further delay, the one hundred States that have already ratified the Principles. Let us not forget that we are talking about the lives of children and teenagers who are at risk.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the presidency of the United Kingdom for organizing this open debate. We also thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Ms. Yoka Brandt and Mr. Gregory Ramm for their statements. We offer special recognition to Luxembourg for its leadership in the Informal Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as the negotiation of the

draft presidential statement to be adopted at the close of this debate. We welcome the presence of Mr. Jean Asselborn.

The introductory statements and the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/245) illustrate once again the persistent violations and abuses that children affected by armed conflict continue to face. The chapter on the evolving nature of conflict and emerging challenges to the protection of children cries out for the attention of the Council.

Although the primary responsibility for protecting civilians falls on the State, and while those States that fail to protect their children are putting their own future at risk, it is also true that new tactics emerging in conflicts represent threats without precedent to all children. In this regard, we are concerned that schools are being used for military purposes, including as military barracks, weapons caches, command centres, detention and interrogation centres. This situation not only puts children and their caretakers at greater risk of attack, but also clearly increases school absences when parents do not send their children to school out of fear, and obstructs children's own right to education.

We are further concerned over the use of unmanned aircraft in areas inhabited by civilians, which increases casualties among children, makes it impossible to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, and seriously weakens the capacity of communities to defend their children. By the same token, it is deeply concerning that children are being used as suicide bombers or human shields.

We support the Secretary-General's call on parties to armed conflict to immediately cease committing grave violations against children. We also believe that the issue of persistent offenders or perpetrators of abuse against children should continue to be addressed. It is imperative that those responsible for serious violations be brought to justice in order to pay for their crimes; this is a task that we must undertake until it is completed.

We believe in strengthening national capacities in the justice and security sectors, as well as in the creation of specialized chambers and mixed tribunals. We consider the complementarity of international justice to national mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, to be equally as important, especially in the fight against impunity for persistent perpetrators.

On the basis of the aforementioned points, we support the further consideration of another mechanism at the Council's disposal — the application of a sanctions regime. Currently, we have four sanctions committees with criteria for the designation of serious violations of the rights of children in Côte D'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the Sudan. We also have the lists in the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General, beginning with annex I, which lists the parties to the armed conflicts on the agenda of the Council. Further work is needed to ensure the imposition of sanctions against offenders.

Regarding the signing of action plans to halt the recruitment of children, we are pleased to see that their numbers have continued to increase, as have the establishment of dialogues with parties to conflicts. However, from our own experience we prioritize the signing of peace accords that comprehensively address the problems of the country involved and seek a sustainable solution and a construction of a firm and lasting peace. We advocate for the issues of children affected by conflict to be addressed in any ceasefire agreement, as well as in post-conflict agendas.

We remain especially concerned about the continuing conflict in Syria, where children have been victims of unacceptable and unbearable violations, and we join in the calls made by the Secretary-General to the Government and affiliated groups to cease engaging in acts of violence that kill children and cause their suffering.

Mr. Menan (Togo) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Sir, for having organized this debate. I take this opportunity to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Ms. Yoka Brandt, Mr. Hervé Ladsous and Mr. Gregory Ramm for their statements and the efforts of their respective entities. I welcome the presence in the Chamber of Foreign Minister Asselborn, whose country, Luxembourg, under the leadership of Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, is playing a key role in the Council in improving the situation of children and armed conflict.

For 10 years now, the Security Council has undertaken many measures to end grave violations against children in armed conflict. The strategies defined to date, including the signing of action plans between various actors and the United Nations, have led to some progress. We welcome and encourage the continuation of these strategies. These positive results, however, should not allow us to forget that the number of

child victims of attacks with explosives, indiscriminate bombings, and the use of materials and other methods of warfare prohibited by international humanitarian law continues to grow.

Moreover, there has been an upsurge in the use of children to commit suicide attacks or to serve as human shields. In Afghanistan, it is reported that more than 500 children died in suicide attacks in 2012. The Syrian conflict, which may already have claimed more than 93,000 lives, has not spared children. An entire generation of children has thus been sacrificed, and it is reported that more than 6,700 children have already lost their lives there.

On the African continent, the fate of children in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the Sudan is rather dismal. They are recruited, used as objects, killed, raped or maimed, and subject to other forms of violence.

My country is just as concerned about another form of war tactic, which is the targeting of hospitals and schools. In this regard, it is reported that between 2005 and 2012, national armed forces and armed groups used schools and universities in at least 24 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America as military bases, interrogation and torture centres, and weapons and ammunition depots, thereby exposing these schools and universities to attack from the opposing armed party.

There are several reasons that perhaps lie at the heart of the ongoing violations against children in armed conflict, first and foremost a lack of resources for the implementation of plans of action by those countries having signed them. It is also difficult to establish contact with non-State armed groups with a view to their signing action plans with the United Nations. Finally — and this is hardly an exhaustive list — there is the slow pace of the process of the prosecution of perpetrators, owing to weak national criminal jurisdictions and the inadequacy, or even absence, of a cooperation framework between national and international courts.

That is why Togo supports the recommendation contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/245) and urges the Council to play a greater role, alongside the Secretary-General, in efforts to, inter alia, bring those parties to conflict that have not yet done so to sign plans of action and to ensure that the necessary resources are earmarked for their implementation.

In order to induce non-State armed groups, which generally do not consider themselves bound by the obligation to protect children, to sign such action plans, it would be advisable to engage in an open and frank dialogue with them. The experience of certain countries that have known conflict and have taken that path should inspire us to move forward along those lines.

The various initiatives and the numerous efforts undertaken to put an end to violence against children will be ineffective if we do not resolutely tackle the issue of impunity. Indeed, impunity must remain a concern of the international community, given that almost all perpetrators of such violations remain at large, although there was a verdict in early 2012 in the case of Thomas Lubanga.

Genuine and effective measures must be taken at the national, regional and international levels to put an end to impunity. The numerous meetings on the issue of children in armed conflict will not help to resolve this issue the perpetrators are not held to account, if national Governments hesitate to prosecute and try them or deliver them to the competent jurisdictions, and if local populations do not cooperate in the process of arresting them.

While continuing the process of reflection on the decisive action that it could take in the context of this combat through its peacekeeping operations, the United Nations should help countries to build the capacities of their national institutions and modernize their penal legislation so as to carry out investigations aimed at prosecuting perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

Moreover, States must, in a regional and subregional framework, develop and strengthen cooperation and reciprocal judicial assistance, which could prove effective.

My country supports the draft presidential statement to be adopted at the end of this debate and thanks once again the delegation of Luxembourg for its determined efforts to finalize it.

Mr. Kim Sook (Republic of Korea): Mr. President, let me at the outset express my sincere appreciation to you for having convened this debate. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui; Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous; the Deputy Executive Director

of UNICEF, Ms. Yoka Brandt; and the Associate Vice-President of Save the Children, Mr. Gregory Ramm, for their informative briefings.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245). While encouraged by the positive developments referred to in the report, we remain concerned at the fact that grave violations against children continue to occur. We are also worried about emerging challenges for child protection, including the military use of schools and the detention of children by security forces. The situation in Syria is particularly worrisome. It is disturbing that, among the well over 93,000 people estimated to have been killed to date, many thousands are children.

Against that backdrop, my delegation appreciates the crucial role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict in protecting children from the devastating effects of conflicts. We commend the tremendous efforts made by and the commitment of Ms. Leila Zerrougui since her assumption of the post last year. As a staunch supporter of her mandate, the Republic of Korea will continue to cooperate closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

I would like to underline the following key points.

First, ending impunity is the key to combating violations and abuses against children, as well as ensuring their non-recurrence. We fully acknowledge that accountability for the most serious crimes against children has been strengthened through the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as well as that of ad hoc and mixed tribunals. The verdict of the ICC on Thomas Lubanga last year was indeed a landmark decision. While welcoming that decision, my delegation would like to encourage all States to extend their full cooperation to the ICC to further enhance accountability at the international level.

Ensuring accountability at the national level is equally important. All States should continue their efforts to strengthen national mechanisms, including domestic criminal laws and executive and judicial systems to investigate and prosecute those responsible. We hope that all relevant United Nations entities will pay greater attention to supporting States' efforts in that regard.

Secondly, I would like to underline the significance of concrete, time-bound action plans as key tools for protecting children from current and future abuses. My delegation welcomes the signing of action plans by the Governments of Myanmar, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo last year. We also welcome the fact that all parties in Nepal and Sri Lanka have been removed from the lists contained in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report after the full implementation of the action plan. We hope that all parties listed in the Secretary-General's report will prepare and implement action plans without further delay.

In that regard, my delegation believes that engagement by the United Nations with non-State armed groups is crucial. To that end, independent and unhindered access of the United Nations must be allowed, and contact between the United Nations and non-State armed groups should be further facilitated.

Thirdly, the Security Council should put increasing pressure on persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children, including the adoption of targeted and graduated measures against them. To that end, links between the children and armed conflict agenda and the sanctions regimes should be further strengthened. We support the recommendation made by the Secretary-General in his report to strengthen the provisions for the protection of children in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping, special political and peacebuilding missions, including the deployment of child-protection advisers.

Additionally, we would like to further encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to share specific information contained in the Secretary-General's reports with the relevant sanctions Committees, including through regular briefings.

Last but not least, ensuring the compliance of parties to armed conflict with international law should be the starting point in preventing grave violations against children. In that regard, I would like to encourage all States to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which is the key legal instrument in that respect.

Mr. Bouchaara (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate the United Kingdom for having convened this important debate under its presidency. I should like to thank Mr. Ladsous, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Ms. Yoka Brandt

and Mr. Gregory Ramm for their respective briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Deputy Prime Minister of Luxembourg in this debate and congratulate Ambassador Lucas on her commitment to this important issue on the agenda of the Security Council.

The protection of children in armed conflict is a major challenge for the international community, given the size and seriousness of the crimes perpetrated against human rights, international law and international humanitarian and refugee law. That challenge compels all of us to act in a concerted, coordinated and effective manner.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/245) is an exhaustive and very useful document of the actions and initiatives taken by countries affected by issues related to child protection and the prevention of children's involvement in armed conflict. It also enables us to assess the challenges and constraints that the countries concerned are dealing with in establishing criminal responsibility for the perpetrators of such crimes, strengthening punitive measures for the guilty and ensuring that such crimes do not recur. Signings of peace agreements and the implementation of national action plans and programmes preventing child recruitment by armed forces and groups have made it possible to relaunch investigation processes and criminal proceedings against the perpetrators of such crimes.

The atrocities endured by children in armed conflict have a devastating psychological and socioeconomic impact on the victims and their families. Strengthening access to support and social reintegration services will enable those children to successfully reintegrate into their societies and communities. In the view of my delegation, the establishment in July 2011 of a human rights due diligence policy should help to strengthen existing mechanisms. The Secretary-General's report indicates that in some situations refugee children have been forced to rejoin armed groups as soldiers. That situation poses major challenges for United Nations efforts.

Prevention strategies demand a global, integrated approach that addresses normative aspects as well as institutional ones. That applies particularly to the establishment of laws that criminalize the recruitment of children, strengthen awareness mechanisms for families and communities and, ultimately, the establishment of national re-education, training and job-creation programmes that can offer children better prospects through education and training. Implementing such strategies also requires a participatory approach through the involvement of public authorities, civil society, non-governmental organizations and national human rights and human rights protection organizations.

The protection of children in armed conflict is also dependent on collective, coordinated action supported by the United Nations system through technical assistance and the strengthening of countries' capacities. In that regard, my delegation supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that donors be invited into the discussion in order to mitigate funding inadequacies and ensure that action plans that have been signed or are under negotiation are effectively implemented.

Morocco commends United Nations efforts in the area of the protection of children in armed conflict and hopes that the guidelines established jointly with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will be regularly updated, particularly those dealing with the terms of reference of the mandates for the child protection advisers. Fighting child recruitment in armed conflict is primarily the responsibility of the parties to the conflicts, who have the duty to protect children. Respect for the dignity of children is also a collective responsibility. Coordinating the efforts of every sector of the United Nations system involved should also be a priority.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. I would also like to thank Special Representative Zerrougui for her briefing and the important work her team is doing to advance the protection of children in armed conflict. And I thank Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Ms. Yoka Brandt and Mr. Gregory Ramm. We recognize that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNICEF and Save the Children, which they represent here today, are very pertinent to the advancement of the children-in-armed-conflict agenda, and I thank them all for their informative and comprehensive briefings.

Rwanda believes that the adequate protection of children is both the primary responsibility and the moral obligation of Governments, and even more so in situations of armed conflict. That noble objective should be encouraged and supported in the Security Council's work. In that context, we stand ready to support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-

General for Children and Armed Conflict and of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

In 2011, the Rwandan Government established a national commission for children in order to promote children's rights and develop a plan of action to protect children from abuse, violence and exploitation. Children's summits are also organized every year to ensure that children's voices are heard on issues that concern them. A well-functioning system is in place whereby children in orphanages are placed in families. In addition, Rwanda has put in place child-protection systems at the community, district and national level. The judicial approach is child-friendly. Judges, police and local authorities are trying to deal with abuses of children.

We are concerned, however, that violations continue against children in various conflict situations, and that the number of persistent perpetrators has increased, as evidenced in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/245). Rwanda calls on all parties to cease violations against children and on Governments to hold those responsible for such violations of children's rights accountable. The Security Council should partner States in order to ensure that justice is rendered.

We welcome some positive developments, particularly where State and non-State armed groups cited for violations and abuses against children have formulated action plans to halt their violations. We call for those plans to be implemented and urge those who have not yet done so to enter into negotiations with the United Nations for the preparation and implementation of concrete, time-bound action plans concerning all violations against children. In that regard, the signing of action plans by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar and Somalia, in addition to the progress made by other parties in releasing children, is a good step.

Strengthening and increasing assistance and national capacity-building is the important next step in ensuring full implementation of the plans. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular, the impact of the armed conflict there on children is worrying. We call on all armed groups to immediately cease all forms of violations and human-rights abuses against children. We emphasize the indispensable role of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations country team in monitoring and reporting on grave abuses of children. In that regard, we support supplying the Mission with adequate child protection advisers.

Concerning the Central African Republic, although violations against children decreased during the reporting period, Rwanda is concerned about the alarming reports that child recruitment and abuses occurred throughout the first half of 2013. We call on parties involved in those acts to exercise restraint, release all child soldiers in their ranks and vacate schools occupied by military forces or armed groups.

In Mali, we call for the immediate deployment of an adequate number of child protection advisers throughout the Mission to cover child protection infractions. The United Nations should ensure strict compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, as well as adequate training for all peacekeepers, including all those involved with child protection.

In Syria, Rwanda notes with concern the unacceptable death toll on children in the conflict there, and reiterates its call on Council members to use their leverage over the parties to the Syrian conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and of children in particular. Belligerents should be required to vacate children's areas, schools and hospitals; measures should be taken immediately by the parties to protect the lives and dignity of those innocents caught up in the conflict.

Rwanda calls on the Secretary-General to strengthen the child-protection capacity in all peacekeeping and United Nations missions. In that regard, we welcome the upcoming deployment of child-protection capacity to the African Union Mission in Somalia. We encourage the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to create and enhance partnerships with independent organizations such as the European Union, the African Union and NATO. Their involvement in conflict mediation, peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding missions will strengthen implementation of the guidelines relating to children and armed conflict.

In conclusion, we believe that the protection of children in armed conflicts necessitates continued commitment and consultations between the United Nations and the Governments concerned, which should take on primary responsibility for the protection of

their citizens, including children. The Government of Rwanda remains committed to the protection of children and ready to share our humble experience in that regard.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): We deeply appreciate Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui's remarkable work, undertaken in pursuance of her mandate, to implement the international legal framework for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. With a firm yet pragmatic approach, she has been able to obtain the cooperation of States and regional organizations. We welcome Deputy Prime Minister Jean Asselborn to the Council. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas and her team have done a splendid job in putting together a very comprehensive draft presidential statement. Luxembourg has conducted inclusive and skilful negotiations to bring all Council members on board.

Children are the most valuable resource we have. A society's soul is reflected in the way it treats its children. The United Nations Charter's adage "to save succeeding generations" urges us to invest in children's future, which is in fact our future. We know that millions of children are trapped in wars and conflicts. They are killed, maimed, raped and subjected to sexual violence. They are recruited, abducted and detained, and are coerced into becoming part of armed conflicts.

Some progress has been made to slow down this scourge, especially in developing norms and standards. Thousands of children have been demobilized, rehabilitated and reintegrated. Much more needs to be done to ensure compliance, fight impunity and protect children's rights in the face of new risks that come about as a result of the evolving nature of conflict.

As Ms. Zerrougui pointed out this morning, the absence of clear front lines and identifiable opponents and the tactics used by terrorist groups make children vulnerable in conflict situations. Children have been used as suicide bombers and human shields. Schools continue to be attacked, which particularly affects girls' education.

Persistent perpetrators of violence against children must be brought to justice through national judicial systems and, where applicable, the use of international justice arrangements.

The draft presidential statement to be adopted today sends a strong signal: the Council condemns all violations of applicable international law impinging on children's rights. It demands that all parties to conflict immediately put an end to such practices and take special measures to protect children.

In his report (S/2013/245), the Secretary-General referres to an increasing number of child casualties incurred through the use of armed drones. He has also called for adherence to the principles of precaution, distinction and proportionality and for transparent and effective investigations when child casualties occur. For its part, Pakistan believes that the use of armed drones violates sovereignty, causes civilian casualties and puts communities at risk of reprisal attacks. Drone strikes radicalize disaffected communities and increase the number of terrorists. Urgent and intense negotiations are needed to address the issue of armed drones.

Pakistan fully supports the mandate of the children-and-armed-conflict mechanism, including its reporting and monitoring procedures. We want to strengthen the political consensus around that mandate to ensure better protection of the rights of children in situations of armed conflict. For that purpose, the legal parameters of the mandate must be respected. Focus should continue to remain on situations of armed conflict and those threatening international peace and security. We are encouraged by Ms. Zerrougui's outreach to Member States to understand and address their concerns in that regard.

The draft presidential statement to be adopted today clearly recognizes the primary role of Government, which is to be supported and supplemented by the United Nations, in providing protection and relief to children affected by armed conflict.

Before concluding, I would like to make the following suggestions.

Every effort should be made to ensure that the information collected through the monitoring and reporting mechanism is accurate and verifiable. The Council should finalize objective and balanced listing and delisting criterial, in full consultation with Member States. The terms "armed attacks" and "armed groups" should be replaced by "terrorist attacks" and "terrorist groups" in cases where a clear determination has been made that the attacks were launched by terrorist outfits. There is no need for legal euphemisms in that context.

Finally, I thank Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous, UNICEF Deputy Director Yoka Brandt and

Save the Children Associate Vice-President Gregory Ramm for their statements. Their contributions have enriched our discussion in the Council.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation welcomes the United Kingdom's initiative to convene this debate on children and armed conflict. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zerrougui; the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Brandt; and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Ladsous, for their briefings. I have also listened to the statement by Mr. Ramm, the representative of Save the Children.

Children carry the hope for human progress. The ability of children to grow up in a secure and safe environment depends on the caring and joint efforts of all Governments and the international community as a whole. However, in many parts of the world, children are the most vulnerable group and are subject to the suffering caused by armed conflict. The protection of children in armed conflict is the abiding obligation of all parties to a conflict.

China is greatly concerned by violations of the rights and interests of children and supports the tireless efforts of the United Nations — and the Security Council in particular — to use their respective advantages to protect children in armed conflict on the basis of their respective mandates. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the following.

First, to protect children from harm in armed conflict, it is crucial to prevent and resolve armed conflicts. The Security Council should focus on the maintenance of international peace and security as its primary responsibility and give priority to preventive diplomacy through mediation and good offices. Efforts should be made to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflicts by addressing their root causes. That is the best way to protect children and is much more significant than providing remedies in the aftermath of conflicts. All conflicts are not the same, and the Security Council, when addressing issues concerning children and armed conflict, should not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Although sanctions are one way to address threats to international peace and security, they alone cannot remove the root causes of those problems.

Secondly, Governments bear the primary responsibility for protecting children in armed conflicts. To ensure the effectiveness of mechanisms for the protection of children in armed conflicts, the Government concerned should play a leading role. Communication and coordination with Governments should be strengthened. The mechanism for the protection of children in armed conflict should heed and respect the views of the Government concerned through dialogue, coordination and consultation. Priority should be given to supporting and helping the Government concerned in its efforts to protect children and their rights and interests. China urges the parties to armed conflict to carry out their relevant obligations, abide by international humanitarian law and respect and safeguard the rights and interests of children.

Thirdly, the protection of children in armed conflict requires that the international community, in its efforts at post-conflict reconstruction, adopt a comprehensive strategy aimed at creating a conducive security and social environment for the healthful development of children. The international community should give priority to the reintegration of children into their families and societies and to their continued schooling, so that they can resume normal lives.

We encourage UNICEF, the World Bank and other international organizations to strengthen their coordination and cooperation and use their respective advantages in the joint effort to help countries in conflict to build their capacity to protect children and to aid them in their efforts to eliminate poverty, to provide universal education and to work towards sustainable development.

China will continue to work with all parties in an effort to improve the situation of children in armed conflict and will do its utmost to maintain international peace and security so as to save children from the suffering of war.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, and other briefers for their valuable contributions this morning. I welcome the earlier presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg at today's debate.

The progress already made during Luxembourg's chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is encouraging. The United Kingdom

welcomes the strong leadership shown by both Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui and Ambassador Lucas on this work. We look forward to their continued efforts.

This debate is a reminder of why the Security Council's work is so important. The Secretary-General's report (S/2013/245) documents hideous violations — thousands of children killed and maimed by explosive weapons and continuous shelling, the systematic rape and torture of girls and boys and the forcible use of children as human shields. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General has demonstrated effective advocacy and active engagement to prevent those grave violations against children. I am grateful for her report and commend United Nations country task forces for producing reliable and evidence-based information on violations against children.

But a high level of ambition for the children-and-armed-conflict agenda must be sustained. The Special Representative's campaign, announced today, for no child to be associated with State armed forces in conflict by 2016 demonstrates such ambition. The United Kingdom fully supports that goal. In the past 12 months, action plans were signed with parties to conflict in Burma, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We expect, and look forward to, the signing of the additional action plans under negotiation. The expected adoption of today's draft presidential statement builds on that success by strengthening Council consensus to tackle persistent perpetrators.

I call on all of us to address three challenges in particular, namely, implementing the action plans, the reintegration of children and combating impunity.

We call on all parties to conflict that have not concluded action plans to do so immediately. But signing an action plan is only the first step. All parties to conflict must honour their commitments as quickly as possible. To support the implementation of such plans, the United Nations, international partners and Member States must address funding gaps and prioritize the deployment of senior child-protection advisers.

The ultimate tragedy is that of children who grow up to perpetuate the cycle of conflict as adults. Denied a childhood, a home and an education, children become trapped in a world of armed conflict. We can support the successful reintegration of those children into society by stopping the military use of schools and securing provisions to protect children in peace processes.

Finally, impunity for those who commit violations against children is unacceptable. Perpetrators should be in no doubt that their crimes will be investigated and that trials will follow, as demonstrated by the trials of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo and Charles Taylor and the recent transfer of Bosco Ntaganda to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Cooperation between the Security Council and the ICC is critical to ensuring such accountability.

The future of children across the world depends upon the United Nations rising to these challenges. No child anywhere or at any time should needlessly be endangered or suffer in conflict. The draft presidential statement to be adopted today signals that determination.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The Council has before it the text of a draft statement by the President on behalf of the Council on the subject of today's meeting. I thank the Council members for their valuable contributions to the draft statement. In accordance with the understanding reached among members of the Council, I shall take it that the members of the Security Council agree to the draft statement, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under S/PRST/2013/8.

It is so decided.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. That way, we shall be able to conclude the debate before lunchtime.

I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Sinhaseni (Thailand): Let me join others in congratulating the United Kingdom presidency of the Security Council for convening this significant debate. I also thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Ms. Yoka Brandt; and Mr. Gregory Ramm for their

important statements. Allow me to recognize the efforts exerted by Luxembourg as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg underscores the importance that Luxembourg places on its chairmanship.

On the issue of child protection, Thailand is no less concerned than any other Government. Last September, Thailand was the first country to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention to the Rights of the Child on the communications procedure. Our current efforts to harmonize domestic laws and regulations and the relevant protective mechanisms in service to our children further underscores our commitments to enhancing child protection. Our cooperation with UNICEF and other relevant United Nations agencies has been fruitful, constructive and efficient for many decades, and it continues to be enhanced.

Although Thailand is neither in a situation of armed conflict nor on the Security Council's agenda, Thailand attaches great importance to the issue of children and armed conflict. We condemn all grave violations and crimes against children in situations of armed conflict, and we support the effective implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on the issue.

During the open debate on children and armed conflict held last September (see S/PV.6838), Thailand offered our humble views on certain aspects of how the United Nations could better perform its tasks to address the issue of children based on the interest of the child and national specificities. Let me reiterate our views.

First, given the number of United Nations actors working on child-related issues, it is absolutely imperative that each and everyone has a clear mandate and that those mandates and responsibilities are respected. The United Nations is a principle- and rules-based Organization. Respective mandates cannot and must not be conducted, expanded or interpreted arbitrarily. The misinterpretation or stretching of such mandates will not lead us to our common goal of enhancing child protection, but can rather weaken the joint effort of the United Nations and inadvertently put children at higher risk. Mandates should be carefully drafted, endorsed, reviewed and adapted, not in competition with one other but in support of the comparative advantages and respective roles that each United Nations actor should play.

Secondly, situations on the ground in different countries are unique and require different approaches and expertise. Therefore, the United Nations absolutely needs to work in close cooperation with and with the consent of concerned Governments, particularly when it has a mandate to engage with non-State parties in order to avoid unintended negative consequences.

Thirdly, the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245) and the appropriate approach to bring about successful solutions rely heavily on data collection and unbiased analysis. We value receiving important information from all stakeholders, including civil society as appropriate, but such information needs to be accurate, objective, reliable and verifiable. Thailand wants to emphasize strongly the importance of the involvement and consent of Member States in preparing the report from the outset.

Fourthly, more new parties to the conflict continue to be listed in the annexes. In this connection, it is imperative, as well as a logical expectation, to see both listing and de-listing criteria clearly specified in the report after being discussed among the Council members and formally endorsed by the Council, as stipulated in operative paragraph 19 (d) of resolution 1882 (2009). Thailand encourages the Council to give equal importance to both listing and de-listing, as well as to carry out the necessary discussions on this issue in a transparent manner, in close consultation with affected Member States.

Thailand cannot stress strongly enough the importance we attach to the mandates of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We believe that children and women alike must stop bearing the brunt of war and conflicts. The Security Council has a clear role to play in their protection in situations of armed conflict or in situations threatening international peace and security, but this role has to be applied with precision and within the framework of a clearly-defined mandate.

For other situations outside the realm of armed conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian law, an inclusive and holistic remedy must be adopted to ensure the promotion and protection of basic human rights, sustainable development efforts and security considerations. Anything else could exacerbate the situation on the ground and become a self-serving

prophecy when the wrong remedy is applied to the wrong situation. A case in a point is Thailand, which is neither in a situation of armed conflict nor on the Security Council agenda. The issue of independent monitoring and access should not be raised because it is simply not in the mandate and will not be granted. Moreover, the Thai Government and the United Nations country team have already put in place mutually agreed arrangements and continue to enjoy very close cooperation.

Finally, the diversity of views by Member States should not be misinterpreted as a sign of opposition to this important cause, as negligence or non-cooperation, but instead as critical input to strengthen and sustain the work of the United Nations in the protection of our children for the long term. I believe we all aim to strengthen Governments' capacity to protect our children, our future.

Mr. Al-Hakim (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245), which is before the Security Council today, and to congratulate the United Kingdom on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month. We are also very grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, for her role. Through her work she is helping to shed a light on the suffering of children in armed conflict. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg for her work in this respect.

The report refers to incidents involving children that have been caused by terrorist organizations included in the list of parties responsible for violations against children. As all know, Iraq is currently suffering a spate of terrorist attacks and violations against children. Groups are exploiting children to use them in these terrorist attacks. The incidents involving children are not very numerous if we consider that half the population is under 18 years.

The Iraqi Government, however, has taken preventive measures to prevent terrorists from exploiting children. Foremost among these is the system of compulsory education, ensuring that children are enrolled in school and following up on their registration to ensure they keep attending. This is to prevent their exploitation by terrorists. The Government is also responsible for rehabilitating children who have been sentenced by the judicial system, and works to reintegrate them into society.

With regard to the participation of children under 18 years in troops of the Awakening Councils, as noted in the report, Iraqi law forbids those under 18 years from joining the armed forces. Moreover, the Awakening Councils troops have been incorporated into the regular armed forces. The minimum age for joining the armed forces is 18 years. To be a volunteer in the security forces requires a written waver and authorization from one's parents.

In addition to the constitutional requirements, Iraq has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. This is essential for protecting the rights of children. A national, cross-ministerial body has been created to protect Iraqi children and counter the phenomenon of school drop-outs. This body also attends to the special needs of children from poor areas by directly following up on their cases and raising children's awareness of their human rights, which is part of the school curriculum. It is also undertaking other activities to prevent children being recruited by terrorist groups. Iraqi society is conservative and attaches particular importance to family, children and social interaction.

Finally, we would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts and her entire team. We reaffirm that we will continue to cooperate with United Nations bodies to guarantee the rights of children in general and as a priority of the Iraqi Government. We look forward to the next visit of Ms. Zerrougui to Iraq.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, for having organized this debate on the issue of children and armed conflict. I would like to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui. Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; and today's other briefers for their statements.

Over the past 12 years since the adoption of resolution 1379 (2001) in 2001, the issue of children and armed conflict has been a regular item on the Security Council's agenda. A great deal of progress has been made to implement the provisions of the relevant

resolutions. However, a great deal more remains to be done, especially as the nature of armed conflict threatening the maintenance of international peace and security has metamorphosed significantly during the past decade. This is evident from the Secretary-General's reports on this subject, and the comments made by several delegations during our debate today.

India has been a strong supporter of peacekeeping operations mandated by the Security Council. Over 160,000 Indian troops have served so far under the blue flag in all corners of the globe. The experience that we have acquired during the course of that service makes us acutely conscious that adequate resources are still not being made available to fulfil the mandate of Security Council resolutions on this subject. Specifically, we call for more child protection advisors to be deployed in peacekeeping operations.

During such operations, especially in recent times, United Nations peacekeepers from India have also come across the outrageous practice of children being used as combatants in armed conflicts, notably by so-called militia groups. There is a need for the Security Council to examine the implications of this phenomenon on the Council's mandates for peacekeeping operations.

In the wider framework of the subject of our debate today, we would encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to continue to work with national authorities in developing capacities to deal with children in armed conflict. Support for the efforts of national authorities to ensure accountability should be a key focus area. The monitoring and reporting mechanism of the United Nations envisages the involvement of and close cooperation with the country concerned for its effective functioning, and can play a useful role in this regard.

It is also important that United Nations access to non-State armed groups be carried under the cooperation framework between the United Nations and the Government concerned. It is imperative in this regard that action plans signed between the concerned Governments and the United Nations be implemented rigorously.

United Nations disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation and security sector reform programmes, among others, must focus on guaranteeing the safe return of children and their reintegration into society. We believe that the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund can be used to formulate projects to focus on the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict.

There is one issue regarding the report of the Secretary-General before us today (S/2013/245) on which my delegation would like to join others in expressing concern.

Paragraph 16 of resolution 1379 (2001) requests the Secretary-General to report on situations that are on the Security Council's agenda or that may be brought to the attention of the Security Council by the Secretary General, in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter, which specifically limit such issues to those that, in his opinion, "threaten the maintenance of international peace and security". All subsequent resolutions, which draw upon paragraph 16 of resolution 1379 (2001), have reiterated this framework for the Secretary-General's report. However, we note with concern that despite that clearly spelt-out mandate, the report of the Secretary-General includes issues that cannot be considered a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security, as laid down in Article 99 of the Charter.

In our view, by going beyond its mandate, the Secretary-General's report has the potential to divert our already scarce resources in dealing with the issue of children and armed conflict to areas beyond the parameters of Security Council resolutions on the subject. We request the Council to take note of this concern while considering the report.

In conclusion, let me reiterate India's strong support for the objectives set out in Security Council resolutions on the issue of children and armed conflict, and our continued commitment to helping achieve these objectives.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Ruiz (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Sir, for your invitation to participate in this debate and for the opportunity to present the comments of the Government of Colombia on a topic to which we ascribe the greatest importance. I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report before us today (S/2013/245).

In this regard, I recall that resolution 1612 (2005) provides for the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the presentation of reports in close consultation with the concerned countries and, therefore, with their Governments. In that regard, we

emphasize that such close consultations should be held at all steps in the process, in particular in the phase prior to the submission of draft reports to New York.

For these reasons — and in view of the agreement reached between the Colombian Government and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts that, in implementing the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), any dialogue between representatives of illegal armed groups and the Special Representative, the United Nations country team or task force on monitoring and reporting is possible only with the express prior consent of the Government of Colombia — it is with concern that we note that the practice of establishing unauthorized contact with such illegal armed groups continues.

I therefore reiterate the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs at a meeting of the Security Council on this issue on 12 July 2011:

> "It is entirely naive to think that the United Nations or any other multilateral organization can change the minds of terrorist organizations that for decades have struck fear in civilian populations, that profit from illicit activities, that utilize terror as a modus operandi, that use children as their tools to those ends and that have always ignored national and international norms." (*S/PV.6581, p. 8*)

Against this backdrop, it is important for the Colombian Government that the monitoring mechanism strengthen international pressure on such terrorist groups to cease their violent acts and their activities against children rather than creating procedures that may legitimize those groups as political interlocutors. Colombia reiterates that the role of the United Nations role regarding issues related to children and armed conflict should, given the gravity and importance of the issue, an approach that prioritizes cooperation and prevention. Calls for the Secretariat to enter into contact with illegal armed groups even as it seeks to establish punitive mechanisms are contradictory and discourage countries that are working to implement action plans and develop their national capacities to prevent, combat and tackle such problems.

On the other hand, it is important, in examining such situations, to always bear in mind that the work of the Security Council should focus on those conflict situations that pose a threat to international peace and security. It is therefore imperative to distinguish them clearly from situations that are not on the Council's agenda. Every situation must be dealt with individually, and appropriate responses must be sought for the specific circumstances and context of each case.

In strengthening the Council's consideration of the issue of children in armed conflict, denunciation and naming can be useful tools, but they are not completely effective. In that sense, both the Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should evaluate the effectiveness of existing mechanisms in terms of their contribution to strengthening States' national capacities. That has been a central preoccupation of the Colombian Government, which understands that the defence of children involves not only an indisputable constitutional mandate, but an ethical and moral imperative.

Finally, taking into account the context of this debate, I would like to note the possibility of establishing a sanctions mechanism related to children and armed conflict. We should note that sanctions make sense only when applied to Governments that do not respond to the international community's calls for action. However, the implementation of sanctions mechanisms with respect to non-State armed actors in situations not on the Council's agenda could lead to various complications related to the legitimacy of the mandates, the effectiveness of the actions and the credibility of the Organization. It is important that the Council bear in mind the fundamental elements of States and their security before implementing new mechanisms the consequences of which are not yet clear.

Attempts to establish targeted sanctions mechanisms raise questions of all kinds, particularly questions related to illegal armed groups that have carried out terrorist activities and respect neither domestic nor international law. In that context, how does the Council expect to implement its sanctions? On the other hand, under which parameters would such sanctions be enforced against illegal armed groups? What types of issues would be addressed and what types of Government actions would be taken into account with regard to prevention and cooperation?

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Chad.

Mr. Allam-mi (Chad) (*spoke in French*): Chad has lengthy experience in managing and protecting child soldiers, based on the deepest respect for its

national legislation and international obligations, as it has suffered the tribulations of many civil wars and wars in neighbouring countries. Various so-called "politico-military" movements have been a feature of my country. In other words, Chad is indeed a post-conflict country, but it is also a country that has endeavoured to achieve stability through an ongoing national reconciliation policy and to build a country where the rule of law and democracy prevail.

My country has also fulfilled its obligation to protect refugees from neighbouring countries, particularly children. The reconciliation policy reflects our concern for the fate of children as former combatants in armed movements and seeks to provide them with training aimed at returning them to civilian life.

I take a moment to thank our bilateral and international partners, in particular UNICEF, Care International and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which have provided extremely valuable assistance on that front.

However, we have never denied the accidental presence, in the past, of children in our armed forces. Mistakes in determining the ages of children were on occasion inevitable in that the State infrastructure was at an embryonic stage.

Having said that, in 2011 it became possible to state that there are no longer any child soldiers in Chad. My country would therefore have been de-listed from the annex to the report of the Secretary-General had it not been for the isolated cases of about 30 children from the Baba Laddé group, who returned from the Central African Republic following a reconciliation agreement. Those children have, in any case, been freed.

My country has many young people and adults and does not need minors in its military. The paradox is that our armed forces remain on the Secretary-General's list, generating an unfair denigration campaign against the Chadian national army, which carries out its international missions responsibly, with courage, dignity and respect for human rights, particularly the rights of the child.

We are on that notorious blacklist owing simply to a process that began in 2012 and that is aimed at implementing, with our partners, an action plan that had not been completed. That process has been accelerated since the most recent visit of Ms. Zerrougui to N'Djamena in mid-May, during which a road map was signed in that connection. We rely on our partners in UNICEF to work actively beside us to implement the road map.

If there is time, allow me to underline certain essential measures already undertaken by my Government aimed at accelerating Chad's de-listing from the list and at preventing any violations against children. First, in early July we improved the aforementioned legislation on prohibiting the recruitment of minors by adopting a draft directive, worked out with the support of UNICEF. A programme of work has been agreed upon with respect to the joint verification, involving the Chadian national army and a United Nations task force, of the situation in the eight military regions.

The first pilot joint mission will launch activities in two regions on 24 and 30 June. Other regions will follow in July and August. Draft legislation on child protection, including civilian status and penalties for recruitment and the use of children under the age of 18, was submitted to the National Congress on 31 May. It has also created a department on child protection within the national army.

Once again, it appears unfair to us that, for procedural reasons, our entire army should be denigrated and its reputation tarnished in the eyes of the world. We call for the clear-sightedness of those who defend the rights of children and who, it is certain, are playing a role that we respect, but who appear to assess the situation in Chad more unfavourably than it deserves to be, thereby exacerbating the situation, which is much healthier than that in many countries throughout the world.

In conclusion, I reaffirm that there are no longer any child soldiers in the Chadian national army or the Chadian contingent in Mali and that Chad is cooperating actively with the United Nations to ensure that the Chadian national army no longer appears on the Secretary-General's list. Chad respects and will continue to respect its commitment to the rights of the child in armed conflict.

Allow me to conclude by congratulating you, Sir, on having organized this important debate. I also congratulate all of the eminent persons present on their important and relevant comments which have been closely followed by the Chadian delegation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. ?ishchynski (Canada): I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to address the Security Council on behalf of the Friends of Children and Armed Conflict. The 38 Member States that make up this informal network, representing all five regional groups of the United Nations, are Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Mali, Mexico, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Slovakia, South Africa, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay.

The Friends of Children and Armed Conflict thank the United Kingdom presidency for holding this debate and thank the Special Representative and the other briefers for providing the Security Council with timely information and analysis on the impact of armed conflicts on children around the world.

In that regard, however, the Group of Friends regrets that today's debate could not be held in an open format, as has been the case in the past. The traditional open debate provides all Member States with the opportunity to publicly reconfirm their commitments to the protection of children in situations of armed conflict throughout the world and to provide advice and recommendations to the Security Council for further concerted action from the wider membership on an issue relevant to all of us. The 38 Member States that constitute the Group of Friends on Children in Armed Conflict reaffirm their support in the strongest terms for the work that the Security Council has undertaken to ensure the full protection of children from the grave violations committed against them in armed conflict.

Since 1999, the Security Council has established a robust system of protection that has been tirelessly implemented by the Council's partners in the field, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, the task forces and civil society organizations. Part of the system of protection is ensuring that the Security Council is seized of and receives information concerning the situation of children affected by armed conflict. In that regard, the Group of Friends welcomes the recent annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/245) on children and armed conflict and reiterates the importance of such annual reporting, so that the Council may better protect children affected by conflict and hold perpetrators to account.

(*spoke in French*)

The Group of Friends welcomes the recent signing of action plans by the Governments of Myanmar, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, the Group of Friends calls on Member States to establish local groups of friends, such as the one established in Kinshasa, to support the Governments concerned and the United Nations in the implementation of the action plans. We applaud the work of the Special Representative to promote the conclusion and implementation of action plans with listed Governments and now call on the Special Representative to redouble her efforts with non-State actors.

The Group of Friends further urges the relevant Member States to allow for dialogue between the United Nations and non-State actors in order to influence them to cease violations against children and conclude and implement action plans to that end. The Group of Friends also wishes to see greater transparency in action plans and calls for signatory parties to widely disseminate action plan commitments to facilitate community-wide efforts to monitor and support implementation efforts.

(*spoke in English*)

The next true test of the Council's work in halting violations against conflict-affected children is how the Council deals with the category of parties listed by the Secretary-General as persistent perpetrators. Those parties to conflict, which chronically violate children's rights and which have been listed in the Secretary-General's annexes for more than five years, make up more than half of the parties listed by the Secretary-General.

The Group of Friends reiterates its call for the Council to ensure that grave violations against children trigger the imposition of sanctions in all the relevant Sanctions Committees, to take decisive action against persistent perpetrators and, in those cases where there is no designated Sanctions Committee, to consider how to address that gap through proactive means. We welcome the recent discussions in the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on options for increasing pressure on persistent perpetrators. In

that regard, we call for a Secretary-General's report specifically addressing perpetrators and how to hold them accountable.

The Group of Friends also calls on the Council to ensure that the Special Representative regularly briefs the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Council's relevant Sanctions Committees and the Security Council directly, especially on emerging situations such as Libya, Syria, the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Mali.

(*spoke in French*)

Concrete measures for holding perpetrators to account for grave violations against children continue to be rare, as indicated by the Secretary-General in his annual report; yet, holding perpetrators to account is a crucial element for protecting children's rights. The Group of Friends encourage Member States to strengthen national accountability mechanisms and judicial capacities, including by developing child-protection legislation that criminalizes all serious violence perpetrated against children. In those cases where national authorities are unwilling or unable to hold perpetrators to account, due, for instance, to a lack of capacity or resources, international justice mechanisms, including through the work of the International Criminal Court or ad hoc and mixed tribunals, can and should play a complementary role.

Another means by which accountability measures can be reinforced, and by which the Council can make a direct positive difference in the lives of the world's children caught in conflict, is to strengthen provisions for the protection of children in all the relevant Security Council mission mandates. The Group of Friends further calls for the Council to ensure that child-protection advisers are deployed in sufficient numbers to carry out a mission's child-protection tasks, and that they have direct access to senior mission leadership.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. Croatia, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

We thank today's briefers for their presentations and express our appreciation to Special Representative Zerrougui for her highly esteemed work. Her tireless efforts have contributed to the advancement of the children and armed conflict agenda. We would like to assure her of the EU's strong support for her mandate.

We welcome the opportunity to speak today. Acknowledging the practical reasons for the format of the debate at this meeting, we look forward to returning in the future to the practice of addressing the subject in open debates.

The annual report of the Secretary General (S/2013/245) reminds us of the challenges ahead. We have seen progress in some areas — for example, with the increasing number of action plans. Still, children in too many countries are suffering terribly from armed conflict. The situation in Syria is of a special and most urgent concern. Children there have been suffering for more than two years from the most heinous crimes. In addition, the difficult situation of children in Mali and the Central African Republic has been highlighted in the Secretary-General's report.

The widespread targeting of schools and their military use is very worrisome. Children are threatened when schools or hospitals are being attacked or occupied by armed groups. We strongly urge conflict parties to end that practice.

The report also highlights the growing practice of States to arrest and detain children, making them particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. Urgent action is required to prevent and address sexual violence against children, including by providing appropriate and accessible services for their rehabilitation and reintegration, which demonstrates the importance of the Security Council's work on the issue. We also support the work of the delegation of Luxembourg as it chairs the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

We welcome today's presidential statement (S/PRST/2013/8). In order to achieve further progress, we would refer to the valuable findings of the recent seminar organized by Liechtenstein and the non-governmental organization Watchlist.

Let me just mention some of those findings. Briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Security Council, its Working Group and the relevant Sanctions Committees, such as the one she

made following her visit to Syria, should be a regular feature. In addition, the Working Group toolbox should in general be fully applied to perpetrators of grave violations.

Those recommendations go hand in hand with those in the report of the Secretary-General and would contribute to adequately addressing the issue of persistent perpetrators. Still, 29 parties have been listed for a period of five years or more. The instrument of regular Security Council Working Group field trips would help in the follow-up on the implementation of action plans, as would well-coordinated local networks of Governments and United Nations actors. In that regard, it is also essential that Member States allow the United Nations unconditional access to armed non-State actors.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) continues to play a crucial role in fighting impunity. Serious crimes of international concern should be dealt with by national judicial systems, but when they are unwilling or unable to do so, States parties to the Rome Statute should consider referring those situations to the ICC. Further institutional dialogue between the ICC and the Security Council and effective follow up of referrals made by the Security Council to the ICC could assist in ensuring accountability.

As it is crucial to implement existing commitments, I would like to provide the Council with an update on the EU's strong commitment.

The EU and its member States spent €200 million between 2009 and 2012 on assistance related to children and armed conflict in the countries listed in the Secretary-General's report. The EU is also systematically addressing child protection in all of the EU's crisis-management missions and operations. For example, the EU has adopted minimum training standards and in 2013 introduced a specialized training programme on children and armed conflict for its diplomatic staff, in cooperation with UNICEF. EU training missions, the most recent one being in Mali, provide training to armed forces on, inter alia, humanitarian and human rights law.

Children have the right to be free from fear and want. Let us make sure that they can enjoy their childhoods, so that they will become strong, self-confident and responsible members of our communities.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I thank also the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, for her briefing, and those speakers who also briefed the Council at the beginning of this morning's meeting. I also welcome the presence of Mr. John Asselborn among us.

We have read with interest the report of the Secretary-General before us on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245). Despite the fact that the Special Representative has, for the first time, addressed in her report the issue of the crimes and violations committed by armed terrorist groups, particularly with regard to recruitment of children, it is regrettable that she disregarded other incidents reported and documented by many governmental and non-governmental sources. Those sources have reaffirmed that Salafist and Wahhabi fundamentalist groups have recruited children. It took the Special Representative two years to include those armed terrorist groups on the list, despite the fact that they recruit children in the context of the conflict in Syria.

We would have wished that the Special Representative had requested in her recommendation on Syria that the States sponsors of fundamentalist terrorist groups, which are known to all by now, stop supporting those groups by financing them and providing to them arms, munitions, information and intelligence, and that they lift the unilateral coercive economic measures that they have imposed on the Syrian people, of which Syrian children are the primary victims as a result of the lack of development programmes and financing and due to the weakness of the national economy.

It is most alarming that the Special Representative insists on including the Syrian armed forces on the list and on considering them responsible for the bombing of schools and hospitals, even for disfiguring children and committing acts of sexual violence against them.

Allow me to address those claims one by one.

First, with respect to the bombing of schools and hospitals, let me say that we welcomed the Special Representative and her delegation in late 2012. She met

with the ministers concerned, particularly the Minister of Education, who provided her with documented proof of the extent of the acts of terrorism committed against educational establishments and schools by armed terrorist groups. She also made expanded field visits to schools, hospitals and shelters in Damascus, Homs and the surrounding areas; however, for some reason, she chose to disregard what she saw with her own eyes: that the Syrian Government is using those schools as shelters for numerous families.

Acts of aggression by armed terrorist groups continue to be perpetrated against educational establishments in Syria; this has been documented. Such acts include forcibly preventing inhabitants from sending their children to school and bombing schools and nearby areas, including deliberately, as happened with an engineering school and other schools in Damascus.

The health-care infrastructure has also been targeted by those armed terrorist groups, which have destroyed, burned and looted more than 35 per cent of Syrian hospitals. We have provided the Special Representative with a video recording, with sound, of terrorists preparing to bomb a hospital and another recording of the detonation itself. However, there is no mention of that heinous crime in the report. That incident alone should have been sufficient to warrant the inclusion of those terrorist groups on the list of shame for having bombed schools and hospitals.

Secondly, with respect to the killing and disfiguring of children, the world has seen the repulsive crimes perpetrated by terrorist groups against children since the beginning of the crisis. Mohammed Qatta, a 14-year-old child, was shot to death in Aleppo by elements of a fundamentalist terrorist brigade of the al-Nusra Front calling itself the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. He was whipped and tortured in front of his parents on charges of blasphemy. In another incident, a 4-year-old child named Faisal was hanged by terrorist fundamentalist groups after being raped and dragged for a great distance.

Two days ago, on the Saudi Al-Arabiya satellite channel, we witnessed the excitement of a Salafist Wahhabi sheikh from Kuwait, Shafi al-Ajami, who takes pride in having cut the throats of Syrian children in Hatla, in Deir Ezzor. Many other heinous crimes have been committed by the al-Nusra Front that should have been included on the list of terrorists provided to the Council.

Thirdly, concerning sexual violence against children, how is it possible that the crimes committed by those terrorist armed groups, including rape and sexual violence, the murder of children, and acts of violence against girls and women throughout Syria were not mentioned in the report? How could the taking of girls and women as spoils of war and sex slaves not be mentioned? How could that group of thugs of war, sexual perverts and cannibals who reside in certain Gulf sheikhdoms be free to issue edicts on satellite channels making such crimes permissible under the banner of sexual jihad or "fornication jihad"?

We denounce the fact that the report fails to make mention of the suffering of Syrian children under Israeli occupation in the occupied Syrian Golan. We have drawn the attention of Ms. Zerrougui to this issue several times since she took office, emphasizing the necessity to give it due importance in her reports. She has not done so, however.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that the Syrian Government is committed to protecting its citizens, particularly children, and that all perpetrators of acts that violate the safety and security of children will be held strictly accountable. In addition, the Syrian Government passed a law this year criminalizing the involvement of children under 18 in any armed conflict, punishable by 10 to 20 years of hard labour.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Thu (Myanmar): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting on the important issue of children and armed conflict. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for providing us with the report contained in document S/2013/245. And I take this opportunity to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, for her positive commendation of the Government of Myanmar on the important steps it has taken to better protect children.

Indeed, my delegation is pleased to see many positive conclusions about my own country in the Secretary-General's report. The very first paragraph on Myanmar highlights the fact that

> "[i]n 2012 there were encouraging commitments and actions by the Government of Myanmar to prevent and end grave violations against children" (*S/2013/245, para. 99*).

It also acknowledges that the number of cases of the recruitment and use of children by the national armed forces has decreased, thanks to prevention measures and strengthened recruitment processes. That progress was the result of the wide-ranging democratic reform measures instituted by the new Government just over two years ago, which included its renewed commitment and efforts towards promoting and protecting the fundamental rights of the people, including women and children. The signing on 27 June 2012 of an action plan between the Government of Myanmar and the United Nations country team was a historic development that demonstrated the Government's firm commitment to ending the recruitment and use of underage children by the armed forces.

The implementation of our action plan has gained momentum with the launching, in cooperation with the country task force on monitoring and reporting, of an awareness campaign among the armed forces, at various levels, designed to increase understanding of the laws and regulations prohibiting underage recruitment. There were reports of a slight rise in the number of complaints of underage recruitment in 2012 compared to 2011, but that was due not to actual recruitment increases but to enhanced awareness of the complaint mechanism and a newfound freedom of expression.

Just seven months after the signing of the action plan, a total of 66 underage recruits were allowed to demobilize and reintegrate with their parents on two occasions. During 2012 alone, 538 potential underage recruits were rejected at the screening stage. The number of demobilized so far may not yet match the list of suspected underage recruits provided by the country task force, as it is a time-consuming job to check and verify them thoroughly around the country; the list may also include fabricated complaints. My delegation fully recognizes that many challenges remain to be addressed. There may still be some cases of individuals who are guilty of illegal recruitment, intentionally or unintentionally. The Government does not condone such individual violators. We must therefore distinguish isolated cases of certain individuals from the policy of the armed forces as a whole, which have laws prohibiting the recruitment of underage children for military services.

With regard to access to operational regiments, since the action plan was launched the Government has already allowed the country task force to make at least 10 visits to monitor regional commands, basic military training facilities, military recruitment centres and mobile recruitment teams. Visits to some areas have been put on hold due to the absence of many officers and other ranks from their regiments on ongoing national duty for overriding reasons of defence, security, disaster prevention or resettlement. The absence in large numbers of the rank and file does not make for effective or meaningful monitoring visits.

As my delegation has stated time and again, the best way to enhance the protection of children in armed conflict is to address the root causes of those conflicts by promoting peace, national reconciliation, sustainable development, poverty eradication and the protection of human rights. The reported violations took place during military clashes in Kachin State more than a year ago. That fighting is now a thing of the past. The guns have fallen silent in every corner of the country since the Government recently reached ceasefire agreements with almost all the armed groups, including the remaining group of the Kachin Independence Organization, which has also struck an agreement with the Government in recent peace talks. Just last week the Government granted humanitarian access to Kachin State for the first time in a year. We hope that the spread of peace and security will eliminate the alleged violations in both our armed forces and non-State armed groups.

The action plan and renewed commitment are now in place to further address the issue. The Government needs greater encouragement from the United Nations, with full understanding of our challenges, in order to speed up its implementation. If the United Nations can increase its support for Myanmar's efforts to achieve full implementation of the action plan, and de-list Myanmar's armed forces, the Tatmadaw Kyi, Myanmar could become a model success story of the ending of the use of child soldiers. To that end, Myanmar looks forward to working closely with the Office of the Special Representative and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mrs. Malenga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I would like to ask the interpreters to listen carefully to my statement, as I will try to

skip details in view of the limited time available. At the outset, I would like to say how pleased I am, Sir, to see you presiding over the Security Council for the month of June. My delegation is grateful to the Council for putting on its agenda an issue that particularly affects the Democratic Republic of the Congo, that of children and armed conflict. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the issue (S/2013/245). And I thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Ms. Yoka Brandt and Mr. Gregory Ramm for their work on the problem of children and armed conflict.

On 28 June 2012 Mrs. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, stated in her annual report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva that

> "thousands of children continue to be killed, maimed, abducted, subjected to sexual violence, denied humanitarian access and deprived of health care in many countries" (*A/HRC/21/38, para. 2*).

She went on to say that in several countries children were also "used as suicide bombers and human shields". That description corresponds exactly to the purgatory that Congolese children endure daily owing to the presence of various foreign and domestic armed groups, particularly the rebels of the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M-23), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda and others who plunder the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In fact, the language of weapons and violence has resurfaced in North Kivu since the M-23 rebels who deserted from the ranks of the Congolese army in April 2012 turned their weapons on the regular army. The conflict situation currently prevailing in that part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and more specifically in and around North Kivu, has led to a resurgence in violence and crime, the primary victims of which are women and children.

Massive displacements due to violence continue in North Kivu, where it is well known that many children are kidnapped by the rebel forces of M-23 and pressed into forced labour for mining. Children are also used to break up rocks to make gravel in quarries. Once broken up, coltan is used in electronic devices. The highly radioactive nature of that substance explains the frequency of respiratory ailments, which are sometimes fatal, among those who handle it. Many Congolese children have been used to transport and mine coltan. Those who survive are traumatized by the acts of vandalism and barbarity committed against them by M-23 rebels.

Thousands of child victims of violent attacks by M-23 have suffered serious physical and psychological damage. Adequate reparations are needed to cover emotional damage, for example in cases of depression, loss of self-esteem, stress, involuntary abortions for young girls who were raped, infant mortality and sexually transmitted infections.

In areas affected by insecurity, education has been suspended because dozens of classrooms have been destroyed, and some schools are overcrowded due to the arrival of displaced children or are serving as temporary housing for persons displaced within their own countries.

My delegation is speaking on behalf of children whose families, usually in dire economic straits, cherish the hope that concrete steps will be taken to provide them with reparations. In terms of education, children displaced by fighting have virtually no access to school, which makes them more vulnerable to being recruited by armed groups. We also note that many schools have not resumed classes following the clashes provoked by armed groups in South Kivu. Moreover, it remains true that in recent years the armed forces and non-State armed groups have used schools and universities for military purposes in violation of the right to education laid out in the main international instruments on human rights. Their acts constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity.

My delegation takes this opportunity to appeal to the armed groups operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to put an end to their mistreatment of children and to comply with their international obligation to protect the safety and rights of children.

In terms of security, the Security Council must take into account the protection of children's rights, including in peace negotiations, and the urgent need to end impunity for crimes against children. It must also support the development of programmes and policies to protect children and improve their living conditions.

In conclusion, my delegation protests the intentional and generalized targeting of schools, teachers and students as a tactic of war. In his 2013 annual report

on children and armed conflict (S/2013/245), the Secretary-General recognizes that the military use of schools is widespread. Of the 22 cases covered in the report, 19 involve violations related to education, including schools being bombed and razed by the warring parties and students and education personnel being threatened, kidnapped and killed.

Finally, my delegation welcomes the Security Council's commitment to working for the protection of children from serious violations committed against them in armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Doubane (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): Today's agenda item on the plight of children in times of conflict provides me with the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's accession to the presidency of the Council for this month and to assure you of my delegation's support during your presidency. I take this opportunity to reiterate my gratitude to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Togo, who carried out his work in an exemplary manner last month while presiding over the Council.

I express our gratitude to Luxembourg, represented by Ms. Sylvie Lucas and the Deputy Prime Minister, and which chairs the important Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue, Under-Secretary-General Ladsous, UNICEF and Save the Children, which is indeed doing exemplary work on this issue that is so important for humankind.

The agenda item under discussion today is a crucial issue for us, as it relates to children and the future of humankind and of our shared world, which must be protected from threats, particularly in conflict.

The situation concerning children in the Central African Republic, which improved slightly in 2012, has once again become alarming and even critical since the crisis that led to regime change on 24 March. Indeed, whether it is the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), children enrolled in the various rebel groups, or simply those deprived of education because of the war, the children of the Central African Republic are experiencing severe hardships that compromise both their future and their lives.

In the case of the LRA, attacks often target schools, where the rebels recruit children for use as child soldiers or to carry loot and stolen and pillaged items if they are boys or as sex slaves and cooking staff if they are girls. It is the same for other rebel groups, in particular the Séléka, which has recruited children for the same tasks. What is distressing is that even those previously removed from conflict and who have passed through transition centres and returned to their family and social environment are recruited again. These children, including street children in cities, have not been not spared forced or voluntary recruitment.

While the proper place for children is and remains in their family, at school, on the playground or at recreation centres, those affected by conflict are enrolled in so-called self-defence militia to protect their village, becoming choice targets in conflict. Those fleeing into the bush with their parents to avoid being killed are exposed to the weather, mosquitoes and wild beasts and risk certain death.

Meanwhile, schools, if they are not destroyed, simply become barracks where tables, benches and textbooks are used for firewood. What kind of a world do we live in? Teachers themselves try to shelter in the bush to save their own lives and those of their family members. This sad picture, as I just said, ruins any hope of building a peaceful country, as its future workforce will not be adequately trained or educated.

The scourge can be contained or ended in the Central African Republic only if we build a State of law that respects and guarantees rights and freedoms, including those of children; create a peaceful environment where families can do their best to create a decent life for themselves with a view to promoting the healthy emotional and physical development of the child; and make school a second venue for socialization, after the family, by ensuring that it remains status-neutral and protected from conflict and that its facilities and property are not occupied, vandalized or destroyed by belligerents; and only if the State, civil society and non-governmental organizations mobilize financial, human and logistical resources to that end. That is why a reasonable share of the budgets of these moral and physical entities must be set aside and increased each year for children and their development.

The Central African Republic, a fragile country and victim of recurrent conflict, must break the cycle of rebellion if it wishes to build a State of law and effectively

preserve its achievements, and do its all to comply with international standards in order to protect children in their lifestyle and environment. That is why we express the desire to strengthen our cooperation with the United Nations, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations involved in the issue in order to find ways and means to eradicate the scourge. If, as the saying goes, "the child is the father of man", in the future we must spare no effort to protect children if we want this to be a world of peace, security and, above all, development.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6981

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6981st meeting
Tuesday, 18 June 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Sir Mark Lyall Grant	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Oyarzábal
	Australia	Mr. Bliss
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Sharifov
	China	Ms. Jiang Hua
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Erroja
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Sul Kyung-hoon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Libya

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13-36649 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Libya

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Libya to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Tarek Mitri, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Council will hear briefings by Mr. Tarek Mitri and Mr. Eugene-Richard Gasana, Permanent Representative of Rwanda, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011).

I now give the floor to Mr. Mitri.

Mr. Mitri: On 8 June, Benghazi witnessed a tragic event that caused a considerable loss of life, the greatest loss of life in eastern Libya since the revolution. What started as a peaceful demonstration outside the barracks of an armed brigade in the city deteriorated into an exchange of fire that left many dead and wounded, mostly demonstrators. The protesters were calling for the Libya Shield Brigades, which mainly comprise revolutionary formations under the operational control of the Chief of General Staff of the Libyan Army, to be dismantled and for the army and police to be entrusted with the role of exclusive security forces.

The Libyan authorities took swift action in the wake of that incident and transfered control of several brigade barracks in Benghazi to the Libyan Army. The General National Congress issued its Decision No. 53, which charges the Government with the task of dealing with armed groups that remain outside the control of the State and with immediately presenting a proposal for the integration of armed brigades. The Government responded promptly with a decision to proceed with the establishment of a national guard into which armed brigades would be integrated, but differences on the status of revolutionary brigades and their relationship with the State remain unresolved. The security situation in Benghazi deteriorated again on 15 June. In what appeared to be retaliation for the events of 8 June, gunmen attacked an army base and the National Security Directorate. A number of Special Forces troops were killed. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) firmly condemned those attacks, as well as the previous ones, and called on all Libyans to rally around their legitimate institutions.

I would like to briefly touch on the unilateral declaration by the transitional council of Barqa-Cyrenaica on 1 June of a federal region in eastern Libya. The leadership of the transitional council of Barqa have justified this move by what they perceive as the central Government's failure to address security and governance issues in their region. While it is difficult to gauge popular support for federalism in the eastern and southern regions of Libya, the calls for genuine decentralization and better distribution of national resources cannot be ignored. It may not be coincidental, therefore, that the Prime Minister announced, on 5 June, the decision to relocate the headquarters of four major State-owned companies from Tripoli to Benghazi.

When I last briefed the Council in March (see S/PV.6934), I noted a growing polarization on the Libyan political scene, manifested in divisions over a proposed law on political isolation, which demanded the exclusion from public office of persons associated with the former regime and others who had committed human rights violations. Commencing on 28 April, a number of revolutionary groups laid siege to several Government ministries in an attempt to force through the adoption of that law. Those actions had been preceded in March with the storming of the General National Congress and assaults on some members of Congress, including a shooting incident that targeted then-President El-Magariaf. That escalation in the pressure being exerted set a dangerous precedent of the resort to the use of military force in order to extract political concessions.

Be that as it may, the political isolation law was adopted on 5 May. It will have far-reaching repercussions on the political process and on public administration. The law lists a wide range of political, administrative and other posts and defines types of affiliation and conduct as a basis for the exclusion of individuals from public life for 10 years. Proposals that the law include provisions for exempting persons on the basis of their support for the revolution were rejected.

Despite his distinguished record in active opposition to the Al-Qadhafi regime over three decades, Mohamed El-Magariaf was excluded from office pursuant to that law. He chose to resign as President of the General National Congress on 28 May. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. El-Magariaf's leadership of the Congress since its inception and to express my appreciation and gratitude for his support to the United Nations role in Libya and his confidence in UNSMIL, and in me personally, since I took up my duties as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We also owe him a word of praise and respect for his dignified statesmanship as he distanced himself from the Libyan political scene.

Written advice was provided to the General National Congress on international standards, best practices and potential risks of exclusionary measures. I must say that the law as approved falls short of those standards in a number of areas.

In the context of Libya's transition and the legacy of weak State institutions, the implementation of the law risks further weakening of those institutions. On 5 June, the day the law came into force, many prosecutors and judges went on strike in protest at some of the provisions of the law that they believed would affect them.

Those developments demonstrate the urgency of adopting a transitional justice law anchored in truth-seeking, accountability and reparations. A draft law is currently being considered by the General National Congress and UNSMIL continues to advise on its scope and implementation.

In addition, UNSMIL stands ready to assist Libyan authorities in the technical aspects of conducting investigations and trials as part of the transitional justice process. That is particularly significant in the context of the recent decision by the International Criminal Court Pre-Trial Chamber regarding Saif Al-Islam Al-Qadhafi. That decision is the subject of a Libyan appeal. We shall also continue to affirm the importance of cooperation by the Libyan authorities with the International Criminal Court.

Following initial encouragement from the Government and requests from revolutionaries of diverse persuasions, I initiated a series of discussions to facilitate direct talks between the two sides. We stand ready to continue to provide our good offices.

The political and security challenges that now face the country may well be the legacy of decades of authoritarian rule, dysfunctional State institutions and confusion around political norms. That reality invites a national political dialogue that seeks consensus on the priorities for the transitional period — a message that I have conveyed repeatedly to the Libyan authorities. UNSMIL has already provided the Government and the leadership of the General National Congress with advice on issues and modalities for a national political dialogue.

In our conversations with various actors, we also touched on the perceived, as well as the desired, role of the United Nations in Libya. That was all the more necessary in the light of the unanticipated controversy regarding that role following the adoption of resolution 2095 (2013), in March 2013. The controversy surfaced concomitantly with the national political crisis. There were voices that cast doubts on the intentions of the international community and attributed to the United Nations an interventionist design. The fact that resolution 2095 (2013) was adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations raised further misunderstanding, suspicion and even disquiet. On the other extreme of the political spectrum, there were voices calling for a more robust United Nations presence and reminding Libyans, or warning them, that Chapter VII indicated the gravity of international concern. In such a context, we had to concentrate our efforts on dispelling misperceptions, as well as false expectations that were fueled by a formidable flow of disinformation.

In preparation for the election of the constitution-drafting assembly, the United Nations facilitated discussions between a wide range of Libyan decision- and opinion-makers on issues such as electoral systems, voter registration and, most importantly, the participation of women. Through those discussions, Libyans of various political hues recognized the importance of designing a fair, inclusive and credible process. Offering technical advice and drawing on best practices, including the July 2012 national elections in Libya itself, UNSMIL also highlighted the significance of adopting special measures aimed at enhancing women's participation in the constitution-drafting assembly. In the forthcoming period, civic education and facilitation of debates on constitutional issues will have to be a priority.

Conflict-related detentions remain mostly unchanged since I last briefed the Council. An estimated 7,000-8,000 detainees are still waiting to be charged or released. The process of transferring detainees to the authority of the State is slow. In Bani Walid, the scene of armed conflict in October, unanswered questions continue to surround the cases of bodies handed over from Misrata in April. In a number of detention centres, we have observed cases of torture. There is also evidence of deaths in custody due to torture. UNSMIL has consistently emphasized that extrajudicial killing and torture should not be tolerated in Libya, particularly by those who were victims of injustice and repression under the Al-Qadhafi regime. The national consensus on the centrality of promoting human rights should not allow any justification of such violations.

We continue to work closely with the Ministry of Justice and various prison authorities to improve the prison situation. There have been varying degrees of success, mainly in providing decent medical care to inmates. Some legislative initiatives taken in April are commendable. The General National Congress passed a law criminalizing torture, forced disappearances and discrimination, and another clarifying the jurisdiction of the civilian and military justice systems and abolishing military courts' jurisdiction over civilians. We also welcome the introduction of a new bill intended to provide assistance to women who are victims of sexual violence.

UNSMIL remains concerned about the situation of migrants in Libya. The conditions inside those centres remain deplorable. We will continue to offer humanitarian support to such vulnerable groups and to urge the Government and local authorities to address problems effectively and with full respect for the dignity and rights of immigrants.

The plight of internally displaced persons, some 35,000 Tawergha as well thousands of Mashashiya and others, continues to be a major concern. The unilateral announcement by Tawergha community leaders of their intention to return to their hometown on 25 June is a move fraught with risks. While in principle UNSMIL continues to support the Tawergha right of return to their homes in safety and dignity, it is essential that all parties concerned create acceptable conditions for the exercise of that right. To that end, we have intensified our efforts, emphasizing the need to establish a fact-finding mechanism integral to transitional justice.

Border security remains a clear priority for Libya, its neighbours and the wider international community. Recent developments in the Sahel region underscore the importance of effective border security and management. Despite official pronouncements by the Libyan authorities, severe capacity limitations have led to little practical progress to date. Government efforts to address border security require the development of a comprehensive national strategy, addressing the issues of integrating revolutionaries, improving inter-agency coordination, training, operational effectiveness and infrastructure in the southern border region. Libya will also need to engage further in dialogue with its neighbours and international partners. Parallel to that effort, more is expected from the Government regarding accelerating the implementation of development projects in the south, a region whose communities have suffered from marginalization far too long. Prime Minister Zeidan recently visited the south and made promises to move forward in reconstruction and development.

The ongoing weak state of security sector institutions, coupled with a lack of effective national security coordination, continues to be an issue at a time when security incidents throughout the country have grown in number and scale. Progress on Libya's plan agreed on at the international ministerial conference in Paris in February this year has stalled, in part because of the political crisis that has since ensued. In April, we presented a defence white paper to the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff for their consideration. That joint effort of the Ministry of Defence, the Libyan Armed Forces and UNSMIL includes 52 recommendations for a future Libyan defence strategy and 18 immediate priorities.

The Libyan State's ability to fully assert its authority over the south continues to be limited. We believe that the Libyan authorities still have the opportunity to step up efforts to effectively counter threats emanating from there. The support and assistance of Libya's international partners and the cooperation of its regional neighbours will be crucial to that effort. More broadly, we have learned from our experience in Libya over the past 20 months that a piecemeal approach to State-building is not a way to achieve good results, particularly in the security sector, where the needs are huge and immediate.

The risks in Libya should not be underestimated, and, by the same token, the opportunities should not be overlooked. Judging by the speed with which last year's

elections to the General National Congress took place, so soon after the cessation of hostilities, we might be forgiven for thinking that the road to democracy was as simple as it appeared then. As important as those elections may have been in ushering in the beginnings of a new political process and the building of legitimate State institutions, for the foreseeable future the Libyan people will continue to endure the heavy legacy bequeathed to them over decades of brutal rule. Managing the transition is therefore bound to be difficult, perhaps more difficult than we thought a year ago.

The mood in Libya today may have changed since I last briefed the Council in March (see S/PV.6934). Despite the gravity of some of the security and political developments that have taken place over the course of the past three months, Libyans have not lost confidence. Many of them remain unwavering in asserting the principles that underpinned their revolution and their desire to build a modern and democratic State based on the separation of powers, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The President: I thank Mr. Mitri for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Gasana.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): In accordance with paragraph 24 (e) of resolution 1970 (2011) of 26 February 2011, I have the honour to report to the Security Council on the work of the Committee established by the same resolution. The report covers the period from 15 March to 18 June 2013, during which time the members of the Committee met once in informal consultations.

In my last briefing to the Council (see S/PV.6934), I reported on the final report of the Panel of Experts (S/2012/163, annex) and that the Committee had agreed to take follow-up action on five recommendations of the Panel. This follow-up action consisted of the following. On 20 March, the Committee updated the entry concerning Mr. Abdullah Al-Senussi on its list of individuals and entities subject to the travel ban and/or asset freeze. This corresponded to recommendation 7 of the final report of the Panel.

On 1 April, the Committee sent a note verbale to all Member States encouraging them to give due consideration to the submission of designation proposals to the Committee relating to entities or individuals who are found to have been assisting in any way with the finances of entities or individuals already designated under the assets freeze measures. This corresponded to recommendation 8 of the final report of the Panel.

On 3 April, the Committee wrote a letter to the Libyan Government requesting confirmation of the possible establishment of a focal point structure through which all security assistance procurement should be channelled, as well as concerning additional procedures in relation to storing, recording and distributing arms and related materiel. This corresponded to recommendations 1 and 2 of the final report of the Panel.

On 6 June, the Charge d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Libya to the United Nations informed the Committee that the Libyan Government had decided to designate the Military Procurement Department in the Libyan Ministry of Defence, in addition to the Permanent Mission of Libya to the United Nations in New York, as an authorized focal point.

Also during the reporting period, the Committee took steps towards concluding an agreement with INTERPOL concerning INTERPOL-United Nations Security Council Special Notices, which is expected to enter into force in the coming weeks. This corresponded to recommendation 5 of the final report of the Panel.

In informal consultations on 6 May, the Committee received an update from the reappointed members of the Panel of Experts. The Panel reported on a visit to Libya, during which the Panel had noted a positive attitude towards the modified sanctions regime. The Panel had also met the Chief of General Staff of the Libyan Army, who confirmed that a focal point for security assistance had been established in the Ministry of Defence. The Panel further reported on a visit to northern Mali, during which the Panel inspected arms and ammunition seized from armed groups in the areas of Gao and Adrar des Ifoghas, some of which clearly originated from Libya.

In informal consultations on 6 May, the Committee noted the reported relocation of two individuals subject to a travel ban, Mohammed Muammar Al-Qadhafi and Aisha Muammar Al-Qadhafi, together with other family members, from Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman. The Committee noted that the relocations had not taken place in accordance with the exemption procedures established in resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011) and directed the Panel of Experts to investigate the matter.

Subsequent correspondence between the Panel of Experts and the Sultanate of Oman and, on 5 June, a letter to the Committee from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations confirmed that two listed individuals, Mohammed Muammar Al-Qadhafi and Aisha Muammar Al-Qadhafi, together with other family members, had relocated to the Sultanate of Oman.

Lastly, let me provide some updated statistics on the issues dealt with by the Committee since the last periodic report to the Council. In relation to the arms embargo, the Committee approved six exemption requests and received two notifications on which no negative decision was taken. With respect to the assets freeze, the Committee received five notifications on which no negative decision was taken. Also during the reporting period, the Committee received an inspection report from a Member State pursuant to paragraph 13 of resolution 1970 (2011) and paragraph 15 of resolution 1973 (2011), relating to the arms embargo measure.

The President: I thank Ambassador Gasana for his briefing.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.